

Guidelines for the Governance & Oversight Arrangements for Griffith University Research Centres and Institutes, Beacons and Spotlights

1. Scope and Purpose

In pursuit of our vision to be a university of influence that makes significant, impactful contributions to society, Griffith makes a range of strategic investments to amplify our research strengths and enhance our capabilities through platforms, people and processes. These investments are structured to provide a mix of longer term capacity- and profile-building support across areas of strength, and seeding initiatives over shorter terms.

The purpose of this document is to clarify the governance arrangements for two larger scale, centrally supported research schemes: University Research Centres and Institutes (RCIs)¹, and the Beacons and Spotlights program.

2. Definitions and Descriptors

Research Centres and Institutes at Griffith University are designated, prominent research groupings that have been formally established under the [Research Centres and Institutes Policy](#) (RCI Policy) with the aim to enhance the University's national and international profile.

Centres and Institutes establish intellectual communities to support a selected range of key research themes in areas of strength at Griffith. They draw membership from the academic elements, promote strategic linkages with external collaborators and end users, assist in attracting and retaining outstanding researchers and provide them with an outstanding research environment, secure additional external research funding, attract higher degree by research students, and boost high quality research outputs.

Centres and Institutes are differentiated from each other in terms of scale and scope, while sharing the following characteristics: added value through delivery of outcomes not otherwise possible through existing academic elements; critical mass in terms of membership effort commitments; and financial sustainability.

Governance arrangements for University RCIs are outlined in the [RCI Policy](#).

Beacons and Spotlights are bold, problem-focussed research initiatives, each structured as a time-bound program to deliver impact. Beacons and Spotlights are intended to create diverse, agile teams that draw together the strengths and perspectives of a range of disciplines and partnerships to undertake leading-edge, outcomes-focused research programs that are sponsored by the DVC Research. The interdisciplinary approach means that participants in Beacons and Spotlights will span multiple Research Centres and Institutes, without displacing or disrupting their RCI membership.

Beacons and Spotlights are differentiated from each other in terms of scope, scale and duration of support. Guidelines are provided for the [Beacons](#) and [Spotlights](#) funding programs, and these provide further detail on the attributes required for successful applications for this support.

3. Establishment and Support

3.1 Establishment approval and primary internal fund sources

¹ These guidelines do not apply to externally funded centres that are supported by a fixed grant, such as ARC Centres and Hubs, NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence, and Cooperative Research Centres.

Research Centres and Institutes are established under the [RCI Policy](#), by the DVC Research on the recommendation of the Research Committee. RCIs are normally established for an initial period of three years with the option for further extension. Research Centres and Institutes are eligible to receive University research funding via the DVC Research budget; however, there is no guaranteed level of support or funding permanency. The funding model is reviewed annually and is based on performance against key research indicators (primarily research income, outputs, and timely HDR completions) and where appropriate, considering disciplinary variations.

Academic Groups also provide support to RCIs where membership is being drawn from their Schools/Departments, including the in-kind support of salaried staff time (see also Section 3.3). This support is determined by the Group PVCs and includes some level of funding through distribution of Research Block Grant funding that is allocated to the Group, as well as some levels of infrastructure and other support as appropriate within Group operations.

Beacons and Spotlights are established as strategic research programs by the University's Executive Group, on the recommendation of the DVC Research. Beacons and Spotlights receive, respectively, five- and two-years of University strategic funding at a prescribed annual level that is determined at the acceptance by Executive Group of the Beacon or Spotlight business case. Annual continuation of support is subject to satisfactory progress against an agreed research plan and milestones.

Academic Groups also provide support to Beacons and Spotlights, primarily as in-kind support through participants' time, as endorsed by the Heads of Element and approved by the relevant Group PVCs (see also Section 3.3).

Other internal funding schemes such as HDR scholarship allocations, Griffith Postdoctoral Fellowship awards and Griffith University Research Infrastructure Program will continue to be awarded in line with each scheme's objectives and guidelines; no specific additional allocation or 'quarantining' is intended to occur as specified additional support for Beacons and Spotlights. Beacons will not generally be eligible for additional central co-investment for external funding proposals, other than in exceptional circumstances; they should budget accordingly.

3.2 Accommodation, infrastructure and equipment

Research Centres and Institutes. Proposals to Establish or Reorganise a Research Centre or Institute, under the [RCI Policy](#), include detail of the proposed accommodation, infrastructure and equipment arrangements along with an indication of how these will be met. These proposals are only considered by Research Committee following endorsement by the relevant Deans Research and Group PVCs. Proposed changes to these arrangements are flagged through annual agreements.

Beacons and Spotlights are not intended to receive funding to establish a physical 'shopfront' or physical presence. The Academic Groups from which Beacon participants are drawn will be expected to support their researchers' involvement in Beacons by continuing to providing office space and laboratory/facility access (as appropriate), computing as normally provided to academic staff. Development and maintenance of a virtual 'shopfront', including a web presence hosted via the Griffith website, is required (see also Section 3.4).

Significant equipment or infrastructure costs can be considered as part of Beacons and Spotlight budgets where no other funding source is available, and the investment will enable a step-change in research capabilities. This relates to both physical and digital infrastructure, including large and/or

bespoke data management and storage requirements. Notably, measurable outcomes for Beacons include the attraction of research income and infrastructure investments.

3.3 Recognition of work allocations and salary

The [Academic Staff Enterprise Agreement](#) sets the overarching requirements for academic work, work profiles and work allocations, which are managed in accordance with relevant University policies and procedures.

Research Centres and Institutes provide a supportive and productive research environment for staff, including mentoring arrangements for early career researchers, and support of high-quality research training for Honours and HDR candidates. Heads of Elements employing RCI members will recognise the alignment of research and supervision activities through each RCI membership and the research outcomes will be recognised for the employing element as well as the RCI (refer to Sections 5 and 10).

Research contributions and achievements through RCI membership must be taken into consideration when reviewing individuals' performance, engaging in planning and assigning an appropriate work allocation profile under the [Academic Staff Career Development](#) (ASCD) framework.

Research work allocations for salaried Griffith RCI members are recognised as part of the Academic Groups' investment in the RCIs. Effective cash salaries (*i.e.* those paid from external sources such as fellowships, consultancies or grants) will be recognised as RCI income where they are aligned with RCI membership (see also Section 10 regarding "Accounting").

Griffith Beacon leader's salary may be paid from the internal funding support provided. Where necessary, these funds may also be used to 'buy-out' periods of time for other members of the Beacon leadership team.

All other **Beacons and Spotlights** participants' time forms part of the Academic Groups' commitment to each Beacon or Spotlight. Approvals must be obtained for the relevant Head of School (or equivalent) for each participant's proposed time commitment during the application stage and approval must be confirmed at the time of establishing each Beacon or Spotlight. Noting that these contribution levels may not be static throughout the duration of a Beacon's funding period, proposed time commitments should be reviewed annually or as required.

Research contributions and achievements, including through participation in the Beacons and Spotlights programs, will be taken into consideration within the Elements when reviewing individuals' performance, engaging in planning and assigning an appropriate work allocation profile under the [Academic Staff Career Development](#) (ASCD) framework.

Where cash salaries (*i.e.* those paid from external sources such as fellowships, consultancies or grants) have been generated *through the operation* of a Beacon or Spotlight, these will be recognised as income.

3.4 Specialised professional services support

A range of specialised professional support services can be accessed by **Research Centres and Institutes, Beacons and Spotlights**. These may include specialist support from [Griffith Enterprise](#), [Marketing and Communications](#), [Digital Solutions](#), [Library Services](#), [Finance](#), the [Office for Research or Development and Alumni](#), and others.

Consideration is being given to the development of a consistent approach to access to these specialist support services and, where appropriate, the costing of 'in-kind' specialist support services for the purposes of external funding applications.

Some non-standard support services will have associated costs for which **Research Centres and Institutes, Beacons and Spotlights** will need to budget.

4. Membership and Participation

Research Centres and Institutes members are expected to have a clear intellectual commitment to the work of the RCI and to make a reasonable commitment of their research time to activities aligned with the RCI objectives. Membership types and criteria are described in the [RCI Policy](#).

Beacons or Spotlights participation is not intended to replace Research Centre and Institute membership. Equally, membership of an RCI is not a prerequisite for participation in a Beacon or Spotlight. Participants are expected to have a commitment to the collaborative work of the Beacon or Spotlight and to commit a part of their research time that is commensurate with their role in the collaboration and to advance the agreed objectives and outcomes of the program. Key roles include a designated Beacon or Spotlight Leader(s) and Key Researchers, who will bring key discipline expertise to the activities of the Beacon or Spotlight. Beacons may also include Theme/Stream Leaders.

In some instances, it may be feasible for Key Researchers to be simultaneously involved in two Beacons or Spotlights, where they have very strong collaborative alignment to both and where (as above) there is capacity to make a reasonable commitment of research time to deliver the objectives and outcomes of each program. Beacon Leaders and Theme/Stream Leaders can only be participants in one Beacon and, at the discretion of the DVC Research, will not normally be supported to simultaneously be participants in a Spotlight.

5. Relationship to Academic Groups and Schools/Departments

Good working relationships between all key players are critical to the success of each of these research initiatives. It is essential that RCI Directors, Beacon and Spotlight Leaders and Heads of Elements (along with Deans Research and Group PVCs) maintain productive, constructive working partnerships. Proactive communication is central to this goal to ensure there is a clear understanding of shared and distinctive strategic and operational priorities and pressure points.

Engagement by staff in RCIs, Beacons and Spotlights should be viewed as mutually beneficial for Schools/Departments and Academic Groups. Refer also to Section 10 in relation to improved shared recognition of research outcomes. RCI Directors and Beacon and Spotlight Leaders should work together with Heads of Elements and the Deans Research to increase the research profile and performance of the University. Clear points of intersection include research training, HDR programs and pathways to HDR programs, infrastructure access and support, staff recruitment and management arrangements. These senior staff should be prepared to engage constructively in meetings to discuss and advance issues of common interest.

Heads of Element need to remain informed of inputs, outcomes and achievements by their staff members as RCI members and/or through participation in a Beacon or Spotlight.

The Deans Research play an important role also, through the Group leadership, in helping to inform and moderate resource allocations, including allocations of research time within workloads.

In broader internal profiling terms, **Beacon and Spotlight** leadership teams will be expected to participate in a centrally co-ordinated, institution-level Beacons and Spotlights seminar program to maintain a high level of awareness of strategic focus, activities and outcomes achieved through the Beacon program. These will be scheduled outside of the formal review cycle (described further in Section 8).

6. Leadership Appointments and Management

This section distinguishes arrangements for the management of RCI Directors and Beacon and Spotlight Leaders as academic leaders, and Section 8 (below) the management oversight of the performance of the areas that they lead.

RCI Directors may be internal or external appointments made by the DVC Research on the recommendation of the relevant Group PVCs and in accordance with Griffith recruitment and appointment policies.

Oversight of the performance of the RCI, under the leadership of the Director, is undertaken in accordance with Section 8. The DVC Research and Deans Research provide advice and guidance to the Group PVCs regarding the strategic direction and performance of RCIs aligned with their Group.

Group-based Directors report to the Group PVC (or their delegate); the Institute for Glycomics Director reports to the DVC Research. A general description of responsibilities is provided in a [Position Statement](#), with specific targets set in agreement with their respective line managers under the [Performance Management of Academic Managers](#) (AMRP) process. The Deans Research will be active contributors in AMRP process for Directors employed within their Group.

Beacon and Spotlight Leader roles may be filled by appropriately qualified current or new staff. Allocation of this program leadership role is confirmed by the Executive Group, on the recommendation of the DVC Research and with endorsement by the relevant Group PVC.

Oversight of the performance of the Beacon or Spotlight is outlined in Section 8 below. Beacons are also each guided by the [DVC Research's Internal Advisory Panel](#), as described in Section 7.

The DVC Research will meet regularly with each Beacon and Spotlight leader and provide advice and guidance to Executive Group in relation to the performance of each Beacon and Spotlight, relative to their agreed research plan and milestones.

The Group PVC (or their nominee) in the Group employing each Beacon or Spotlight Leader (or the DVC Research for staff employed within the Institute for Glycomics) will be the day-to-day line manager of these staff, while they occupy a Beacon or Spotlight Leader role. The Deans Research will be active contributors in discussions about workload allocations and the [Academic Staff Career Development](#) (ASCD) process for Leaders employed within their Group.

7. DVC Research's Internal Advisory Panel for Beacons

Beacons represent a flagship investment for the University and carry high-performance expectations. Beacon operations are intended to transcend the Academic Group structures in engaging participants and external networks in new interdisciplinary collaborations. While the Beacons are driven primarily by a research agenda, they will also offer opportunities to develop teaching and engagement activities related to their foci. Support for Beacons will include the advice and influence of an internal panel that is convened by the DVC Research, to assist in removing (or navigating) structural barriers and ensuring greater insight into potential capabilities within and beyond the University, as well as in positioning for major opportunities. These internal Beacon-specific panels will meet with the Beacon's leadership team at least two times annually for these purposes.

Each of these panels will be Beacon-specific with membership that spans the Academic Groups and, where deemed appropriate, may include an external member. Membership will be determined by Executive Group, on the recommendation of the DVC Research.

8. Progress and Review

The timelines for progress reporting and reviews of Research Centres and Institutes, Beacons and Spotlights are communicated by the Office for Research, who provide administrative coordination of these processes.

Research Centres and Institutes are provided each year with a report of recorded activity/outcomes data to inform development of a brief annual progress report. Annual reports include brief reflection on achievements during the previous period relative to agreed performance targets, a statement of priorities and performance targets for the next year and a high-level draft budget. These reports are first considered within the relevant Academic Group, before being endorsed by the Group PVC and forwarded to the DVC Research. The DVC Research convenes a panel tasked with reviewing all RCI annual reports and providing advice to the RCI leadership teams and the DVC Research about any emerging synergies, new opportunities or emerging areas of concern.

More thorough reviews of RCI performance and strategic direction occur every three years. From 2021, these will include staff surveys. Third year reviews are conducted by a review panel convened by the DVC Research and includes interview of the leadership team. The panel makes recommendations to Research Committee regarding ongoing status and funding. More detail of these reviews is included in the [RCI Policy](#).

Beacons will collaborate with OR each year in collation of a report of recorded research activity (refer also to Section 10) to demonstrate the uplift provided through their program. Formal annual review of each Beacon will be undertaken annually by the internal, DVC Research's Internal Advisory Panel (see Section 7). The panel may invite input from external parties, as determined by the DVC Research. The review inputs will include a combination of written reports and interview of the leadership team. Annual reporting will include a report on progress against the approved research plan and milestones, a financial report for the preceding year and an annual Operational Plan.

Annual reports and panel recommendations to continue support will be considered by the Research Committee, with recommendations proceeding to the Executive Group.

Spotlights are established with a two-year funding allocation, subject to satisfactory progress against the approved research plan and agreed milestones. A mid-term review and a final review will be undertaken by a panel convened by the DVC Research and will include a combination of written reports and interview of the leadership team. The mid-term review report will include progress against the approved research plan and milestones, a financial report for the preceding year and an Operational Plan for the remaining term. Noting the formative nature of Spotlights, a role of the panel is also to provide advice to the Spotlight leadership teams and the DVC Research about any emerging synergies, new opportunities or emerging areas of concern.

Progress reports and panel recommendations to continue support (within the funded term) will be considered by the Research Committee, with recommendations proceeding to the Executive Group.

9. Measurable Outcomes

Research Centres and Institutes performance measures are largely aligned with institutional KPIs and Research Block Grant assessment measures, such as grants awarded, external research income received, patents, licencing and commercial outcomes, publications and research outputs quality and volume, HDR load and completions, end-user engagement, and outcomes. Each RCI has scope to report on a range of success indicators, as relevant to their vision and annually agreed targets, and to provide a contextual narrative to demonstrate their value-add.

Beacon's and Spotlight's outcome measurements should be contextualised through the high-level ambition of the scheme: address society's most pressing challenges. Measures should concentrate on the value-add of the program, rather than the individual achievements of participants. Outcome measures need to be acutely focussed on the collaborative gains enabled through the programs and achievements seeded through engagement through the Beacon or Spotlight. Reports should specifically highlight where new interdisciplinary outcomes have been achieved as part of the uplift from the program.

Beacons identify a set of measurable outcomes at inception and targets are reviewed and agreed annually. Beacons are designed to operate as outcomes-focused initiatives and there is a high-performance expectation. Measures of success will be diverse and include a combination that is not limited to:

- Influential outputs such as: invited submissions to key decision-making bodies; publications in high esteem outlets; highly cited journal articles etc.
- Attraction of research income and infrastructure investments with a specific view towards leveraging seed funding and to ensuring the sustainability of the program activities post-Beacon funding period;
- Translation of outcomes, such as: demonstrable changes in policy and/or practice; stakeholder uptake of a delivered output; savings through interventions; distinctive course offerings to a large number of Griffith students etc.
- Creation of new avenues for influence such as: new alliances and partnerships formed; establishment of policy development roles; major thought leadership etc.
- Reputation and profile of Griffith as a result of the Beacon activities, using measures such as: awards and recognition; relevant ranking measures; profile as national/international leaders in areas of Beacon focus; social and traditional media monitoring (e.g. reach, share and sentiment) etc.

Spotlights are intended to support a range of activities ranging from nurturing emerging ideas to opportunities for knowledge mobilisation. There is a high expectation that Griffith Spotlights will result in a step-change in the profile of specific areas of Griffith research. Measures of success will be diverse, including but not limited to:

- Reputation enhancement through influential outputs; introducing new paradigms; invited submissions to key decision-making bodies; publications in high esteem outlets; demonstrable impact on local (or wider) communities; formation of new alliances and partnerships; profile as national/international leaders in the relevant field.
- Preparation for attraction of research income and infrastructure investments with a specific view towards securing significant follow on funding from major competitive grant schemes and/or external funding partners.

10. Performance “Accounting” and Recognition

There are multiple purposes in performance “accounting” and recognition. It is important to recognise and reward the achievements of individuals and areas, to further build our research culture and focus efforts toward high quality and impactful research. It is also important for the individual areas and the University to understand progress made and outcomes achieved relative to effort and investment, to inform future strategies and resourcing models.

In support of those goals, changes are being made to the capture, reporting and utilisation of research performance data. Progressive changes will be made through the Pathways to Impact program to better enable capture and utilisation of impact evidence. Changes will also be made to the way that current research performance data is attributed and reported internally.

The University budget model is guided by the Executive Group and utilises research performance outcome data (based on staff employment) to inform the high-level internal allocations of Research Block Grant income across the institution. Group PVCs make determinations on allocations of resources within their own Academic Groups. The DVC Research utilises research performance data (on the basis of attribution to RCIs by staff membership) to inform subsequent allocation of support to RCIs from the DVC Research budget.

Beacons and Spotlights in and of themselves will not receive additional internal disbursements under the budget model. Performance outcomes for these programs will be reported in a similar manner to previous strategic programs, such as the Areas of Strategic Investment (ASIs) and Griffith 2020, to recognise and celebrate the achievements of each initiative and also to provide detail to Executive Group and University Council of the return on the investment. The Office for Research will assist in collation of this information and development of relevant summary-level reports.

Research Centres and Institutes, Schools and Departments. With a persistent focus on the purposes of these “accounting” practices, any outcomes generated through participation in a Beacon or Spotlight will be attributed as usual to the RCI in which the staff have membership and/or their employing element, as would be the practice in the absence of these new programs.

During 2021, steps will be taken to make simple changes to internal “accounting” and recognition of research outcomes, to more clearly convey to Schools and Departments the research performance measures for staff employed within their Element, including a view of the relationship between these outcomes and RCI membership and/or participation in a Beacon or Spotlight. This will extend “double counting” of some activities (i.e. fully recognise the same activity within the RCI that hosts the membership and the School/Department that provides the staff member’s salary and is accountable for their ASCD) to better support recognise and reward the achievements of individuals and areas and to inform considerations of workload allocation and other resourcing at both Element and Group levels.