

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC RESEARCH CENTRES FUNDING GUIDELINES 2016 – 2018

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BACKGROUND

Strategic Research Centres were introduced in 2010 to identify and focus research development in areas with significant performance. This initiative has had positive impacts for both researchers and the university. SRCs have focused research ideas and directions, research leadership and culture; they have raised the visibility of Deakin's research externally and internally and formed a vehicle to focus research investment and planning. Deakin University's research performance in a range of measures, including international rankings and ERA scores, has improved substantially as a consequence, at least in part, of the success of the SRCs and Institutes.

Deakin University began to focus its research activity in 2008 with the establishment of its first research institute, the Institute for Technology Research Innovation (ITRI, which became the Institute for Frontier Materials (IFM) in 2012). IFM remains as a research-intensive entity, structurally independent from a faculty. However, it was clear in 2009, as part of a move to dramatically lift Deakin's profile, that the formation and support of research groupings was critical to develop Deakin's research culture and improve and focus our research performance. Emerging research strengths had been identified in some areas of the university though not in others. Such collectives had not been provided the support needed to develop research programs.

The SRCs were borne out of the need to focus substantial central funding in those areas where Deakin had at least a moderate level of research leadership and vision, good research output and expertise, and the potential for improving external funding and publication success. At their initiation in 2010, the level of research maturity and quality varied widely across the institution, and thus, quite deliberately, the first round of SRCs included at least one SRC in each faculty and representation of a range of disciplines.

The SRCs also aimed to serve as a mechanism to attract and retain high performing researchers and research teams in areas of strategic importance. It was intended that the SRCs would promote increased research leadership and further develop Deakin's research culture. The SRCs were expected to establish and maintain a strong group of researchers with a distinctive portfolio of high quality research. It was anticipated that the research environment created by the SRCs would stimulate research and research training, make more efficient use of resources and increase use of infrastructure, and assist Deakin to build a stronger research profile in the short to mid-term.

Following a competitive application process in 2009, the University established 11 SRCs for the initial triennium (2010-2012) which, together with the two Institutes (Alfred Deakin Research Institute and the Institute for Technology Research and Innovation) were identified as Deakin's areas of research excellence and provided with funding support. During the triennium 2010 – 2012, additional SRCs were established, notably to accommodate incoming research teams. Late in 2012, the Strategic Research Centres were reviewed for the 2013- 2015 triennium. As a result, there were 15 funded SRCs approved.

In 2014, in line with budget constraints, performance of all SRCs was considered and the 2 lowest performing SRCs were terminated. Further, the future direction of ADRI was reviewed, and the new Alfred Deakin Institute – Citizenship and Globalisation was formed, merging ADRI with a complementary high-performing SRC. 2014 also saw the emergence of two new SRCs: the Centre for Economics and Financial Econometrics Research in the Faculty of Business and Law, and the Centre for Rural and Regional Futures in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment. Thus, 13 SRCs and 2 Institutes exist in 2015.

SRC funding represents only one component of the University's Research Investment Allocation Model (RIAM) which, in 2015, totaled \$81M. Of this, \$6.5M was allocated as SRC baseline and performance-based funding. (Refer "Funding Allocation" p.5 for more specific information on the funding).

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SRCs – STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the SRCs is to facilitate research concentration and growth in Deakin's areas of research strength by bringing together groups of researchers around a common research agenda. They are further intended to assist in attracting and retaining high performing researchers and research teams in areas of strategic importance. The aim is to facilitate this concentration without excessive administrative overheads that take time and resources away from core research activities. The SRCs are expected to establish and maintain a strong group of researchers who will develop a distinctive portfolio of high quality research. The research environment created by these groupings will stimulate research and research training, make more efficient use of and increase infrastructure, and assist Deakin to build a stronger research profile in the short to mid-term.

As a result of the recent SRC review and the overall maturation of research at Deakin, the expectations of the SRCs in the third triennium, 2016-18, has been revised. They will be asked to “think bigger”, become more aspirational, promote cross disciplinary collaboration, further improve relationships with Schools and significantly increase their industry engagement and partnerships. They will be expected to be a vehicle to develop research leadership and be a mechanism to take Deakin to the next level (top three in Victoria and top 300 Universities globally) in research quality and impact.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SRCs AND FACULTIES

SRC members are generally members of schools (with a few exceptions), subject to all of the University and Faculty policies and procedures including travel, workload and expenditure. Members work within a matrix framework, administratively and collaboratively working with a School and actively participating in the SRC.

Each SRC must be led by a Director/Co-Directors and are administered within a host Faculty. The line management of the SRC Director and all staff within the SRC remains with their School or Faculty and HR administrative processes and authorisations, including approvals for staff employment, must reflect this arrangement. SRC Directors are also required to report annually to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Faculty PVC on the performance of their SRC. SRC Directorship and Co-Directorship requires time and should be reflected in school workloads; however, this does not apply to non-Director SRC members. Whilst it is expected that SRCs follow University and Faculty policies, the cardinal principle for Schools and SRCs should be to always seek to *minimise bureaucratic activity and maximise the research value* within the SRC.

SRCs will be allocated a budget centre within the Faculty to assist tracking and managing the costs. Accounts for external grants must not be created in SRCs, but rather within Schools to reflect administrative support and financial delegation. SRC performance targets will be set annually based on research metrics and the University's overarching targets and will be agreed between the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, SRC Director and the Faculty Associate Dean Research (ADR). (Refer also “Funding Allocation” and “Expenditure” pp. 5-6.) *SRC member performance contributes to both the school and Faculty research targets.*

SRC Directors are expected to work closely with the relevant Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC), Head(s) of School and Associate Deans of Research and participate on the Faculty Executive and/or other relevant Faculty research-focused committees as required. Likewise Faculties and Schools must support SRCs to achieve the SRCs' and Faculties'/Schools' research potential.

ROLE OF SRC DIRECTOR

The Director is responsible for driving the research agenda, planning for growth, mentoring researchers, benchmarking performance and promoting quality outputs and for ensuring that the SRC operations comply with all relevant Deakin University policies and procedures. Each SRC must

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produce a Research Plan, detailing the vision and directions of the group, and an Expenditure Plan outlining how their funds will be used to support this direction.

The Director/Co-Director(s) is responsible for working collaboratively with colleagues in the Faculties and Schools to stimulate research activity across the University. SRC Directors/Co Director(s) are expected to encourage and oversee collaboration between SRC members and other University staff who may not be aligned to a specific SRC. The research environment created by these groupings is expected to stimulate research and research training, make more efficient use of, and increase, infrastructure, and assist Deakin to build a stronger research profile in the short to mid-term.

Each SRC **must** nominate a Deputy or Co-Directors who will share the role of Director whenever the Director is absent. For larger SRCs it is advisable to identify a Deputy Director who can take on the Director's roles when they are absent.

Finally, SRC Directors are expected to contribute to service on University committees, including the University Research Advisory Committee or participate in other research related roles as required by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

SRC GOVERNANCE & REPORTING

Governance arrangements of individual SRCs may vary according to the level of maturity of a given SRC, but each SRC must define their governance structure explicitly. As a minimum it is recommended that each SRC establish an advisory group, including external industry and research leaders relevant to the SRC to support the strategic direction of the SRC. The group should meet at least once per year. An "SRC Executive" will also be created to provide advice and approval of processes the SRC adopts to distribute funding and to develop research plans. SRC applications must outline how the advisory group will be involved in the governance of the SRC. Decisions on operational and expenditure matters will normally be the responsibility of the SRC Director.

SRC Directors will be expected to meet annually with the DVC(R), their Faculty PVC and their Faculty ADR to present and discuss the previous performance and operation of the SRC in the past calendar year as well as the budget and research plan for the future calendar year. Budgets and plans must be agreed and approved by the DVC(R) and the Faculty PVC, including the targets for key performance indicators. Directors are also expected to attend regular meetings with the DVC(R)/Faculty PVC to discuss SRC operational performance, progress and achievements where requested.

Expenditure will be reviewed at mid-year and at the end of each calendar year. (For further information, refer to the "Expenditure" section on pp. 5-6 below)

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SRC MEMBERSHIP

The individual performance of members of an SRC will contribute towards the SRC's research outputs. It should be noted that not all researchers will be in SRCs or Research Institutes as Faculties are also responsible for supporting smaller and emerging Faculty research groups assisted by the allocation of central research funding provided by the DVC(R)¹.

Membership Types & Eligibility

1. **Full Member** – Deakin academic staff or conjoint staff who are productive** research academics and post-doctoral staff actively responsible for designing and producing research outcomes. The full membership numbers are expected to remain relatively stable over the three years of funding and are not expected to grow by more than 15% per annum unless otherwise approved by the DVC(R).
***The member will be actively undertaking high quality research and have a good track record of research and scholarship that is appropriate to their discipline and have the ability to contribute to the SRC and complement and work with other members.*
2. **Affiliate Member** – Deakin academic staff who are Full Members of another SRC. Affiliate members do not have access to SRC funding and their performance is not considered in the SRC performance and funding calculations however are deemed important in achieving the research goals and objectives of the SRC.
3. **Associate Member** – HDR Students, Junior Members, or Honorary appointments who are considered part of the broader SRC and are deemed important in achieving the research goals and objectives of the SRC. Associate members do not have access to SRC funding and their performance is not considered in the SRC performance and funding calculations.

Members of staff may have valid reasons to be a member of more than one SRC but an individual may only be a **Full Member** of one funded SRC. For performance and funding purposes, the member will be only counted in their principal SRC.

Central membership lists will be maintained by Deakin Research using the ResearchMaster database. Changes to membership lists must be communicated to the Director- Operations and Finance- Deakin Research who is responsible for updating the listings.

All members of the SRC will receive a copy of these guidelines upon joining the SRC from the Director- Operations and Finance, Deakin Research.

Role of Members

SRC members are expected to:

1. Advance the strategic objectives of the Centre by conducting high quality research
2. Identify strategies and tactics for achieving key performance indicators.
3. Identify, discuss and explore new opportunities for research and research partnerships with a particular emphasis on developing external collaborations with Industry.

¹ Funding to support emerging Faculty groups and other agreed expenditure will be provided through an annual performance allocation from the DVC(R). Allocations are based upon a Faculty's relative research performance in a set quantum of funds with the calculations based upon the same methodology applied to the performance component of the SRC funding. Whilst the budget provides the expected allocation, faculties will be expected to provide a robust research plan to support this allocation.

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4. Promote collaborative research and scholarship amongst and between the members of the centre and with the greater Deakin University research community and beyond.
5. Assist in creating a vibrant research culture for HDR students and ECRs within the SRC and within Schools.
6. Apply for research funds in the name of the SRC and administer the funds through Deakin University.
7. Understand their obligations and comply with the expenditure requirements as outlined in these guidelines.
8. Ensure authorisation for travel and conference attendance is made utilising existing school guidelines and University policies and procedures.
9. Comply with University policies and procedures in regards to administration and expenditure matters.

Note that excluding Directorship and Co-directorship, that SRC membership has no application in workload assignments.

NB: HDR Students supervised by SRC Members

SRC members are encouraged to supervise HDR students. HDR students are enrolled in Schools and HDR costs and the payments for student conference and other research expenses are borne by the School. These HDR figures will count towards the performance of both the School and the SRC.

Central funding to support all HDR students is provided to each Faculty annually from the RIAM. The dispersal of this funding on a per capita or per SRC basis is the responsibility of the Faculty PVC and ADR in line with the RIAM funding guidelines.

FUNDING ALLOCATION

SRC support will include 3 years of baseline funding supplemented by performance based funding. The top performing SRCs will be rewarded with a greater share of the performance funding. It is expected that associated Faculties/or Schools will provide administrative support to SRCs so that central research funds can be used primarily to support research development and activity. As a minimum, Faculties/Schools should provide SRCs with human resources, leave, finance and HDR administrative support as well as support for seminar and conference organization.

Base funding will be calculated on size, membership characteristics, discipline (in particular the ability to attract external income), stage of development, ACG income (and cost implications) and performance history and will be provided at one of three levels:

Level 1:	\$100,000
Level 2:	\$200,000
Level 3:	\$300,000

A checklist will be utilised to determine the baseline funding based upon the characteristics listed above.

The performance funding allocation is set in September of each year and is based on metrics that support the quality research and research training, industry engagement and international

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collaboration strategies of the University. These are the same metrics on which Faculty research funding will be allocated. The performance funding calculation is outlined below.

Strategy	Metrics (<i>subject to final modelling</i>)	Percentage (<i>subject to final modelling</i>)
Quality	ERA Ratings Citations- 3 year rolling (excluding self cites) Category 1 Income Weighted HDR Completions within 3.5 years (weighted for associate supervision)	ERA Bonus 5% 30% 10%
Increasing World Rankings	HERDC weighted points. For journals only ARWU recognised journals will be included and a further weighting of 2 will be given to essential social sciences journals. Weighted Creative works to be included.	20%
Industry Engagement	Category 2-4 Income	30%
International Collaboration	Publications with International co-author	5%

The funding is calculated using the notified membership list at a given time and an aggregated, weighted performance of each of the SRC's members is used in the calculation to determine the final allocation proportionate to the performance of other SRCs. Performance funding is intended to support the Centre's overarching research goals and should not be considered as an allocation for an individual researcher. Whilst performance funding allocations will vary from year to year base funding will remain consistent across the Triennium and is intended to provide a level of certainty and to facilitate forward planning.

SRCs will be permitted to carry forward unspent funds (*Baseline, Performance and ERA Bonus only*) between years within the triennium, however carry forward will be not permitted in the final year of the triennium.

EXPENDITURE

SRC expenditure must comply with all relevant University policies and procedures and, where applicable, duly authorised and appropriate University forms should be used. The processes and authorisation for approval of travel and conference activities remains the authority of the Schools.

The overall principle of expenditure is that SRC funds should be spent in a manner supporting research excellence that is consistent with the expenditure and research plans as approved by the DVC(R) and Faculty PVCs.

SRCs will be allocated a budget centre within the Faculties for cost allocation purposes but it is expected that Faculty financial staff will administer SRC allocations on behalf of the SRC.

In line with University Policy, SRC funding will be provided as an approved expenditure budget as opposed to a transfer of University funds and monitoring of expenditure will occur against this budget.

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In regard to expenditure and financial delegation, SRC Directors will be given delegated authority of for their budget centre in line with University policy (**Financial Delegations policy**). For expenditure above the SRC Director's financial delegation limit, normal signoffs within the Faculty will apply. SRC Directors are responsible for determining the expenditure of their SRC funding allocation but will be responsible to both the DVC(R) and Faculty PVC for maintaining spending within the budget parameters and in line with the agreed expenditure plans.

Internal transfer of costs into an SRC budget centre must be approved by the SRC Director (Budget Centre Manager) in line with University finance policy.

Whilst SRCs will have their own budget centres for administrative purposes it is **not** intended that they create separate hierarchical entities within the University. SRCs should provide a mechanism to foster research growth and provide research leadership across budget centres and Faculties. SRC funding is a relatively small amount in overall terms and is intended to develop research as opposed to meeting operational overheads. Expenditure plans will be scrutinised on this basis.

SRC funding is not intended to be a mechanism to distribute funds evenly across all members and it is expected that funding provided to members is supported by expected outcomes as defined by the SRC Plan. Final decision making on expenditure matters rests with the SRC Director.

Permitted Expenditure:

The following represents permitted SRC expenditure:

1. Engagement of postdoctoral research fellows, research assistants and/or other technical staff to support the SRC's research effort (refer point 4 re administrative support)
2. Seed funding for research projects that support the research objectives of the SRC
3. Funding for external speakers to give seminars, workshops or otherwise interact with the SRC members and HDR students
4. Administration support for the SRC above that provided by School/Faculty (requires justification to DVCR / PVC) - limited to 0.4 EFT
5. Contributions to internal funding programs
6. HDR scholarship top-ups
7. Travel expenditure **up to 15% of the total SRC budget**
8. Equipment expenditure that benefits the whole SRC to a maximum of \$30K per annum.
9. Research workshops conducted in conjunction with Deakin Research
10. Hosting of research conferences for the benefit of the SRC and Faculty researchers
11. Other expenditure as agreed by the DVC(R) and Faculty PVC that support the strategic direction of the SRC

Non Permitted Expenditure:

1. Payment to Schools and Faculties for base infrastructure support such as non-consumable lab costs and office equipment.
2. Researcher Positions previously funded through the School/Faculty
3. Operating expenditure of SRC members. This should be provided by the School/Faculty
4. Entertainment and travel expenses unless it can be demonstrated that they directly relate to the research plan of the SRC and are approved and agreed by the SRC Director. These expenses must also comply with University Policy and procedure (Travel Operational Policy and Travel Procedure, Procurement Procedure).
5. Payments for or contributions towards building works, maintenance or fit-out works

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External Grant Funding to Members of SRCs

All external grant accounts are to be created in the school as opposed to SRC budget centres with research staff likewise to be employed in the school. In line with University policy, funds from different sources e.g. operating or external must not be transferred into SRC accounts as this creates problems with reporting to funding agencies and also distorts the SRC carry forward funds.

ANNUAL SRC PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT, FUNDING AND ASSESSMENT

All SRCs are assessed, monitored and must report against the following research indicators** that align to the LIVE the future University Strategic Plan. The specific metrics include performance in Category 1 research income, Category 2-4 research income, HDR completions, publications (number, collaboration and quality) and citations. Additional KPIs may be set by the DVCR or PVC that reflect the expectations and goals of the SRC.

**Assessment measures may change in response to external drivers and or Deakin University strategic plan amendments.

Year to date performance is calculated on the membership listing current at that point in time. Historical performance will take into account the membership at the 31st December of that year. Where a staff member moves either between SRCs or between a SRC or a Faculty in a particular year, the weighted performance for that full year will be recognised in the new SRC.

In the setting of new targets on an annual basis, consideration will be given to current plus expected SRC membership for the new period. Neither targets nor funding will be revised in line with subsequent changes in SRC membership.

For information on funding allocations, expenditure and performance metrics please contact:

Chris Thompson: +61 3 5227 2159 or chris.thompson@deakin.edu.au

TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT

SRCs will be reviewed on a Triennial basis. SRCs must be endorsed by the Faculty PVC before any application proceeds. As part of the assessment process, a panel will convene to assess applications based upon the collective research performance of the group but will also consider the below areas:

1. Proposed Research Program and Approach:

Applications must contain a statement of the purpose, aims and objectives, innovation and significance of the proposed research plan.

The panel will consider:

- The program of research to be undertaken
- The goals of the proposed research program
- The innovative nature and significance of the proposed research program
- The feasibility of the aims of the research program and the including proposed milestones for achievement of objectives and delivery of outputs and outcomes

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2. Strategic Alignment:

A statement of the alignment of the Centre's aims with Deakin University's strategic direction and identified research strengths and how the Centre will facilitate collaboration with faculties/Institutes and the broader University.

The panel will consider:

- The strategic importance of the SRC
- The proposed internal collaborations focussing on the integration of expertise and knowledge from across the University (ie. plans for integration with University staff outside of the proposed SRC)
- The potential opportunity for commercial research and knowledge transfer
- The proposal's alignment with the existing research activity and priorities of the University and the Faculty
- The alignment of staff members with Deakin's areas of research strength as identified under the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative FoR codes.

3. Capability of Proposed Group including leadership, mix of Early Career through Senior Researchers and proposed governance:

A statement regarding the leadership ability of the proposed Director and the Deputy Director / Co-Director as well as the other senior academics of the proposed Centre. Applications should detail the excellence of the proposed SRC membership and the potential to contribute to and develop areas of research strength as well as the proposed research plan. In addition, statements of how the SRC will contribute to the career development of its members and, specifically, early to mid-career researchers, are required together with a summary regarding the capacity of the SRC and its members to support and mentor HDR students.

The section further requires statements regarding the proposed governance of the SRC including reference to executive committees, faculty/school links and advisory groups.

The panel will consider:

- Evidence of performance, expertise, capacity and suitability of the Director
- The ability of the proposed Director and the Deputy / Co-Director to lead, inspire and implement innovative research
- Evidence of succession planning within the SRC
- The Director's capacity for effective and efficient management and strategic planning
- The team's experience, expertise and capacity and the spread of academic expertise
- Evidence of performance expertise and capacity of senior researchers
- Evidence of solid career development strategies for early to mid-career researchers
- Evidence of strategies to support and mentor HDR students
- Evidence of an appropriate governance structure to support the development of the SRC
- The track record** of all Full Members of the SRC relative to opportunity and the potential to contribute to and develop areas of research strength

** Track records will be considered relative to opportunity and inclusion of ECRs with excellent potential is encouraged

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4. Ability to demonstrate that the grouping created will work collaboratively both within and outside of the SRC

A key strategy of Deakin University is to increase its collaboration of with Industry, International collaborators, Schools and cross discipline (where applicable). The section requires statements as to the collaboration plans and mechanisms of the SRC.

The panel will consider:

- Evidence of industry engagement
- Evidence of a plan to increase Category 2-4 income
- Evidence of international collaboration
- Evidence of collaboration both within and outside of the SRC
- Identified areas of collaboration possible with the SRC
- How the proposed research will build collaboration and critical mass across the wider University

5. The SRC has a clear research plan that sets them on a course to make a significant global impact in their discipline.

The SRC programme will now be entering its 3rd iteration. During the first two programmes a number of SRCs have shown significant development whilst others have maintained existing performance. Performance of Research has dramatically improved and Deakin's research reputation on a global scale has also increased as evidenced by our improvements in global rankings. This section requires statements regarding the "big plans/ideas" the SRC has to continue to develop a global reputation and impact in their discipline. This section requires SRCs to identify 5 "big ideas" that are measurable and actionable and to which the SRC themselves wish to report on and be assessed upon their future reports/performance.

The panel will consider:

- The excellence and significance of the proposed research program, its transformational nature and its alignment with existing research priorities and activity in the Faculty and the wider University
- Whether the proposal demonstrates distinction and evidence of opportunity
- The capacity of the program to lead to the significant advancement of knowledge, expertise and and/or technologies and to expand the University's knowledge base and research capability

6. Existing SRCs will also be assessed against achievement against previous performance targets.

Existing SRCs will be asked to comment on past performance. Where performance may not have reached the performance targets set, the SRC will be asked to comment on past performance and indicate what will be put in place to assist the SRC to meet future targets. Deakin Research will provide previous performance against targets to the panel utilising data held on the research performance website.

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PROCESS FOR OUT OF CYCLE SRC FORMATION / APPROVAL

SRC funding and approval processes occur on a triennial basis. On occasion there will be a need to consider the formation of an additional SRC outside of this cycle but within the funding triennium particularly when high level research teams are recruited to the University.

Such applications are considered on an ad-hoc basis by an Assessment Panel formulated by the DVC(R) and Faculty PVC and approved by the Vice-Chancellor.

Applications will be assessed on the same criteria as the Triennial assessment.

TRANSITIONING UNSUCCESSFUL SRCs

If an existing SRC is not successful in a particular round, the performance metrics of SRC members will be included in the member's Faculty performance and will be included in the determination of Faculty Research Support. Faculties may elect to fund previous SRC groups as a designated research cluster. Whether the SRC grouping is retained as a Faculty cluster or other unit will be at the discretion of the Faculty.

CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

SRC funding is awarded under the following conditions:

1. The performance of SRCs will be reviewed annually in accordance with the University's Performance Review Program.
2. SRCs comply with the conditions of these guidelines and University policies and procedures.
3. Requests to vary the SRC's objectives or focus must be submitted to Deakin Research and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor
4. SRCs must exhibit strong research performance as evidenced by outcomes and provide annual reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor. The reporting template will be provided to the SRCs on an annual basis for completion at the annual Budget meetings.

Where an existing SRC exhibits a significant reduction in membership, consistently underperforms against targets and/or consistently (or substantially) fails to meet SRC guidelines, the DVC(R) may elect to discontinue the SRC.

For information on funding allocations and performance metrics please contact:

Chris Thompson: +61 3 5227 2159 or chris.thompson@deakin.edu.au

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ATTACHMENT A: LIST OF SRCs & RESEARCH INSTITUTES

To be confirmed following SRC assessment.

Research Institutes
Alfred Deakin Institute- Citizenship and Globalisation
Institute for Frontier Materials