Policy Statement

The University of Texas at Dallas is dedicated to advancing research activities through the establishment of University Research Units and Organized Research Units. The role of research units in the University is to promote and develop research activities that support the academic goals of departments or degree programs. Research units are either centers, institutes, or laboratories which may identify primarily with one discipline or may be multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary. Additionally, research units should be established only where organized collective activities are involved, as opposed to a collection of individual research activities that are not inter-dependent. Also, research units should be mission-oriented as opposed to discipline-oriented and should have a promise of growth as measured by extramural funding and/or other quantitative measures.

This policy distinguishes between two types of research units: (1) University Research Units and (2) Organized Research Units. As discussed below, the major difference between these two research units is the amount of annual expenditures—less than $3,000,000 for University Research Units or more than $3,000,000 for Organized Research Units. In addition, the review procedures for both types of research units are described in the Evaluation section of this policy.

University Research Units

University Research Units are centers, institutes, or laboratories that have annual expenditures of less than $3,000,000. Centers, institutes, and laboratories are defined as set forth in The University of Texas System Board of Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Rule 40602, Section 2.

A University Research Unit (URU) is established upon approval of a submitted proposal to the Chief Academic Officer. The Chief Academic Officer will review and approve requests in consultation with the Vice President for Research. The proposal should be endorsed by all relevant department heads and deans. The template for establishing a URU is available on the Office of the Chief Academic Officer's webpage but in general the proposal should include:

1. the purpose and the benefit of the URU to the university, including a mission statement and objectives of the URU and how it aligns with the university's strategic plan;
2. the director, faculty members and other participants who will be involved with the URU;
3. planned activities;
4. space requirements;
5. a budget including the financial support required and the source of those funds; and
6. a proposed organizational structure

If the URU wishes to have an Advisory Council, the dean must approve the potential member list and forward that list to the Office of the Chief Academic Officer with the proposal. An advisory council or committee must be approved by the UT System Board of Regents in accordance with the Regents' Rules and Regulations, Rule 60302 "Advisory Councils of an Institution."

Organized Research Units

Organized Research Units (ORU) conform to the criteria set forth in The University of Texas System Board of Regents' Rules and Regulations, Rule 40602 "Organized Research Units." Typically referred to as centers, institutes, or laboratories, ORUs have annual expenditures of at least $3,000,000.

An ORU is established upon approval of a submitted proposal by the University’s president to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Each ORU must have a director and an advisory committee or council that must be approved by the UT System Board of Regents in accordance with the Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Rule 60302 "Advisory Councils of an Institution." Proposals to name an ORU for an individual or entity must comply with the provisions of the Regents' Rules and Regulations, Rule 80307 "Naming Policy."

Guidance on what to include in the proposal to establish an ORU can be found in Section 3 of Rule 40602 or in the Organized Research Unit Template on the Office of the Chief Academic Officer's webpage.

Evaluation Procedures for URUs and ORUs

URU procedures: URUs are evaluated every five years using the university-wide assessment tool. The assessment reports should include estimated expenditures and should be forwarded to the Chief Academic Officer, who, in consultation with the Vice President for Research, will determine if the URU will continue.

ORU procedures: ORUs are evaluated every five years using the university-wide assessment tool. In addition, evaluations shall occur in accordance with Regents' Rule 40602 which states that at least every six years an ad hoc committee shall be formed to assess the ORU's goals, objectives, present functioning, recent accomplishments, future plans, adequacy of space and budget allocations, and future prospects to contribute to the institution's vision and mission. This report will be forwarded to the president, who, in consultation with the Chief Academic Officer and the Vice President of Research, will determine whether the ORU will continue. The president will send the ad hoc committee's report to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

The five year review cycle for ORUs and URUs occurs in conjunction with the review cycle of the school with which the ORU or URU director is affiliated.