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Guidelines for centres at Luleå University of Technology

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1. Introduction

At Luleå University of Technology, centres are established for close collaboration with external partners in the form of research and development, innovation and education. The first guidelines for establishing centres were published in 2008¹ and, after a review in 2019², the guidelines were revised with regard to the processes for establishing, following up and evaluating centres. A need was also identified to develop a concept for stimulating exchanges of experience between centres. It is particularly important to create clarity and equality for the external partners who wish to conduct a structured collaboration with the University within multiple subject areas.

These guidelines are intended for employees of Luleå University of Technology who wish to establish a centre with external partners, and for staff working at the University's centres who require guidance in their activities or in the event that a centre is to be decommissioned.

1.1 The purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to clarify what centres at Luleå University of Technology are, as well as to offer specific support and guidance for the establishment of a new centre, the operation of an existing centre and, finally, the decommissioning of a centre.

2. What is a centre?

At Luleå University of Technology, a centre is a partnership between the University and external partners for long-term, close research, education and innovation collaboration within a thematic area. Centres can also contribute to programmes and courses in the thematic area identified in the partnership, such as marketing courses and programmes or through guest lectures. The purpose of collaboration within a partnership is to develop and put to good use knowledge and expertise that together make it possible to address societal challenges that demand the type of inter-organisational collaboration that a centre facilitates.

The operations conducted at a centre shall contain both academic depth and breadth, as well as specialist knowledge. Ideally, operations at the centre should encompass several subjects taught at the University or other higher education institutions. External partners create good conditions for centres to ensure quality and breadth in the organisation. A centre should have more than one external partner.

2.1 A partnership for collaboration on research, development and innovation

Centres strengthen the University's role as a resource for the surrounding community while at the same time our partners enrich our research, development, innovation and education.

¹ Ref No. 224-08, re. decision 1-2008

² LTU-3616-2018

The external partners in our centres help us to formulate problems and project descriptions and may also contribute resources to fund projects. They can also participate in projects themselves. Centres provide a platform for applying for grants when the call demands collaboration with external partners.

The partners stake out the direction for the centre and formulate a clear objective and purpose. These are defined and presented in a letter of intent signed by the parties (see Section 3.1).

Collaboration within a centre is formalised in a separate collaboration agreement regulating the terms and conditions for collaboration and the funding of the centre's operations. A template is available with the terms and conditions for collaboration between the partners.

To differentiate centres from other major research collaborations, the centre should be named according to the model below, where X clearly communicates the centre's thematic area of operations.

- In Swedish: Centrum för X
- In English: The Centre for X
- Acronyms shall be based on the Swedish name.

2.2 Organisation and management

All centres are affiliated to a host department and are within the remit of the head of department. The head of department is ultimately responsible for the centre's operations and finances and for ensuring that the centre complies with the University's rules and regulations. The centre is administered by the department's administrative staff under the leadership of the head of administration. Even if the centre's researchers work at several of the University's departments, the centre itself is always affiliated to a single department. The head of department may delegate decision-making authority on specific matters within the framework of the University's decision-making and delegation procedure.

Operationally, the management of a centre consists of a steering committee and an operations manager. The operations manager has staff and results responsibility for those members of staff whose principal organisational affiliation is the centre. Heads of division at departments have staff and results responsibility for teachers and researchers who are involved in the centre's operations through various projects but whose organisational affiliation is to one of the University's departments, for example, through their research subject.

Departments are the owners of projects conducted on behalf of a centre.

2.2.1 Steering committee and mandate period

Luleå University of Technology works actively to ensure gender equality and diversity that contributes to a creative study and work environment. The values on which the University is

founded are courage, openness and trust. The work of the steering committee should be based on these values.

The main task of the steering committee is to set out a strategy and objectives and to follow up the centre's operations. The specific tasks of the steering committee are stated in the collaboration agreement.

The steering committee should have members representing all parties at the centre and strong representation from external partners. The chairperson should be an external representative. The head of department appoints the chairperson and members of the steering committee based on recommendations from the partners. The standard mandate period is three years.

2.2.2 Operations manager

The head of the department to which the centre is affiliated is responsible for recruiting an operations manager. Recruitment takes place in accordance with the established procedure for recruiting managers to the University, with due consideration for openness, transparency, gender equality and equal opportunities. The operations manager is appointed by the head of department after consultation with the partners. They are to be employed by Luleå University of Technology and should normally have a doctorate and experience of conducting their own research in a subject within the centre's area of operations. The operations manager's duties include leading and coordinating the centre's activities. The operations manager brings matters to the attention of the steering committee and executes the steering committee's decisions.

The steering committee and operations manager report to the head of department, who is responsible for ensuring that decisions are reached in accordance with the University's decision-making and delegation procedure. The head of department may delegate decisions on specific matters to the operations manager within the framework of the University's decision-making and delegation procedure.

2.2.3 External partners

External partners are the companies or other organisations that enter into the collaboration agreement, either as a founder of the centre or at a later date. Just as partners are vital to initiating the establishment of a centre, so they have an important role to play in its ongoing activities by, for example, recommending representatives for appointment to the steering committee, participating in and funding projects and contributing to following up results, decisions on changes to the centres operations or concerning the decommissioning of the centre.

2.2.4 Stakeholder network

To ensure the widespread dissemination of the knowledge developed by the centre, a network of other stakeholders may be created. Companies and other organisations that join such a network can be kept informed of research results via newsletters, websites, attendance at seminars and conferences and similar activities. The stakeholder network can provide input

concerning the centre's ongoing research and developments within the centre's area of operations. The detailed form of a stakeholder network is a matter for the steering committee.

3. The process for establishing a centre

The first step in establishing a centre is that, together with external partners, a researcher or other member of staff at the University identifies a thematic area or societal challenge that must be met through research, development and innovation in an inter-organisational collaboration. The parties must have a common interest in formalising collaboration in the form of a long-term, sustainable partnership.

The prerequisites for establishing a centre vary and establishment will therefore take different forms. That said, the process will always include the following: a letter of intent, a decision by the vice-chancellor to develop a centre, the development phase, a decision by the vice-chancellor to establish the centre, the signing of a collaboration agreement and the establishment of the centre. These phases are described below in Sections 3.1–3.3.



3.1 Letter of intent

The letter of intent is the basis for the vice-chancellor's decision to develop a centre.

Once discussions between the parties have reached a stage where the University must formally state its position, a letter of intent should be drafted between the parties who intend to be founding partners in the centre. The letter of intent is drafted jointly and signed by the parties.

Use the *template for operational planning*³ on the University's website to ensure that all elements of developing a centre are covered. This documentation can be added to later to provide a basis for the vice-chancellor's decision to establish the centre.

The letter of intent is the basis for a decision by the vice-chancellor to develop a centre and, as such, it should provide a brief overview of the intended centre. A letter of intent shall include the following:

- A description of the theme of the centre and the societal challenges it is intended to tackle.
- The purpose and objectives of the organisation, its business idea and operational plan.
- A suggested name for the proposed centre.

³ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

- The partners who have already signalled their intent to join the centre or who may do so. This includes internal and external researchers/research groups, as well as external partners.
- The parties interests in the centre and their (intended) investment and contributions to the centre in the form of knowledge, work and annual funding.
- A rough budget (see the *template for preparing a budget prior to a decision to develop a centre*⁴).
- A timetable for developing and establishing the centre.

The parties should review the documentation to ensure that the concept is sustainable and in compliance with these guidelines, and have the budget checked by an economist.

3.1.1 Prior to the vice-chancellor's decision to develop a centre

The head of the intended host department submits the letter of intent to the Collaboration and Innovation Unit (samverkan@ltu.se). An administrator at the Collaboration and Innovation Unit will ensure that the matter is prepared for a decision by the vice-chancellor.

If the vice-chancellor decides that work should begin to develop the proposed centre, the head of the host department may sign the letter of intent and the development phase can get underway.

3.2 Development phase

During this phase, documentation to support the vice-chancellor's decision to establish a centre is prepared.

Once the vice-chancellor has decided that the letter of intent may be signed and the development phase can begin, work begins in earnest to establish the centre. To support the vice-chancellor's decision to establish the centre pursuant to the letter of intent, the following documents should be prepared in this phase:

- The head of department's proposal to establish the centre.
- Operational Plan
- A long-term budget (see the *template for preparing a budget prior to a decision to establish a centre*⁵).
- Collaboration agreements with external partners (not signed).
- Recommendations for chairperson and members of the centre's steering committee.
- Other relevant information on which the vice-chancellor can base their decision.

Work in this phase involves the further development of the business idea and the drafting of collaboration agreements, an operational plan and long-term budget. Both the operational

⁴ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

⁵ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

plan and the budget should cover a minimum of five (5) years of operation and funding. A decision to establish a centre rests on having the foundation of long-term, sustainable partnerships.

These documents describe in greater detail the partners investments in the form of both work and funding. The organisation and management of the centre, which must comply with the guidelines in Section 2, is also described in detail.

As Luleå University of Technology is legally liable for the operations conducted at the centre, collaboration agreements must include the necessary terms and conditions to ensure that operations are conducted in compliance with the statutory requirements that the University is subject to as a public authority.

Collaboration agreements shall clearly describe the centre's funding, the parties to the centre and their rights and obligations, and the centre's organisation, including roles and responsibilities, and the duties and authorities of each role.

The point of departure should be the University's template for collaboration agreements, which includes mandatory terms and conditions for collaboration agreements. Other terms and conditions may be added by the parties adapted to the operations to be conducted.

The operations at centres are conducted in the form of projects, with project partners signing separate agreements for each project. Project agreements can be adapted to the specific requirements of each project and to the terms and conditions of the collaboration agreement.

Templates are available for operational plans and budgets⁶ and these must be used. The parties should review their operational plan and budget with an economist to ensure that long-term funding is secured.

3.2.1 Prior to the vice-chancellor's decision to establish a centre

Once an operational plan, budget and cooperation agreements have been drafted and it has been ensured that they comply with these guidelines and that long-term funding is secured, and that partners have collaboration agreements that provide for long-term, sustainable collaboration, the documents are submitted as a basis for the vice-chancellor's decision on whether to establish the centre.

The head of the host department emails the documentation to samverkan@ltu.se for preparation prior to the vice-chancellor's decision. An administrator at the Collaboration and Innovation Unit will ensure that the matter is prepared for a decision by the vice-chancellor.

⁶ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

3.3 Establishment of the centre

Once the vice-chancellor has decided that the centre is to be established, work can begin to establish the centre.

3.3.1 Collaboration agreements

Once the vice-chancellor has decided that the centre is to be established, collaboration agreements may be signed by the parties. In this case, the University's authorised signatory is the head of the host department.

3.3.2 Beginning operations at the centre

Once collaboration agreements are signed, operations can begin. The head of department appoints the chairperson and members of the steering committee. The head of department decides on the appointment of an operations manager in consultation with representatives of the partners. Information to trade unions about the establishment of a new centre is provided within the framework of local cooperation at the department in question.

3.3.3 Presentation, marketing and communication of new centres

New centres must be presented on the Luleå University of Technology website in accordance with the web guidelines⁷ established by the vice-chancellor and Luleå University of Technology's brand concept. Only formal and active centres are presented under the heading "Centres" on the University's website; i.e., only those centres established and run in accordance with these guidelines. Partnerships are clarified by the presentation of all partners on the centre's website.

When marketing or otherwise communicating centres and their activities, it must be clearly stated that the centre is located at Luleå University of Technology.

4. Centre operations

4.1 Project agreements

Research, development and innovation activities conducted within the framework of a centre take place in the form of projects regulated in separate project agreements or equivalent documents. The key points of project agreements are stated in the terms and conditions of collaboration agreements.

⁷ (Ref. No. 1594-2018)

Externally funded (e.g. by Vinnova or European Structural and Investment Funds) projects are regulated in agreements based on the guidelines and regulations issued by the financier, but always in line with the centre's collaboration agreements. It may be necessary to contact one of the University's lawyers when drawing up a project agreement.

4.2 Operational management at centres

Operations at a centre are part of the University's operations and therefore subject to the University's internal governance documents.

When planning and following up operations, operations at the centre – i.e., management, coordination and the administration of activities – are considered to be part of the operations of the host department and the department's assignments also apply to the centre's operations. The budget for and follow-up of the centres operations are also part of the host departments budget and follow-up. The host department's action plan pursuant to the University's governance model shall also include the centre's activities. In the same way as the head of department is required to hold discussions with heads of division or equivalent when planning and following up operations, they must also have discussions with the operations manager of a centre.

4.2.1 Accounting

For accounting purposes, a centre is a separate cost centre at the host department from which the centre's own costs and income are reported, as well as the transfer of external funds to participating projects. Projects are organised with project numbers under the centre's cost centre. The department is the owner of projects conducted on behalf of a centre and projects are reported in the usual way.

The accounting model for centres is included in the *accounting model for projects*⁸, which is available on the University's website.

4.2.2 Follow up

Luleå University of Technology follows up its operational plan on a regular basis three times each year based on developments in financial and operational results.

An in-depth annual follow-up of centre operations is also conducted for quality-assurance purposes. The host department is responsible for following up the operational plan, including the operations of centres. This follow-up makes it possible to identify results that should be reported in the University's Annual Report and other external communications. The follow-up also makes it possible to detect when activity has ceased. The date of the follow-up of centres is linked to the University's follow-up one (1). A *template for annual follow-ups*⁹ is available on the University's website.

⁸ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

⁹ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

Follow-ups include the following parameters:

- A summary of results and development, including the development of partnerships.
- Financial reconciliation (turnover, funding from partners, external funding and information on new and completed projects).
- Chairperson and members of the steering committee (including any changes during the year).
- Any changes to the composition of partners.
- Challenges and successes in the organisation illustrated by clear examples.

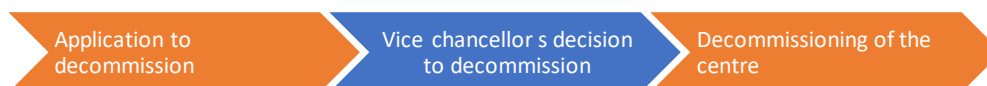
4.3 Exchanges of experience between centres.

A review of centres¹⁰ demonstrated that there is no regular exchange of knowledge between centres at Luleå University of Technology, even if this is both necessary and desirable. Good operational procedures and successful activities should be disseminated to a greater extent to create the conditions for synergies between centres. Operations managers and staff who are either organisationally affiliated to centres or active in projects at centres at Luleå University of Technology should regularly participate in activities arranged to promote the exchange of knowledge.

To strengthen and develop centres, opportunities are created for the exchange of experience between operations managers in annual workshops at which results and working methods can be reported and discussed. These are arranged once or twice a year by administrators at the Collaboration and Innovation Unit.

5. Process for decommissioning a centre

Centres at Luleå University of Technology are key to collaboration with the surrounding community and it is vital that these centres are active and that their operations maintain a high level of quality. It is therefore important to take a decision to decommission a centre once it is no longer active or if the partners or steering committee decide to do so. The decision to decommission a centre rests with the vice-chancellor.



The annual follow-up of the operations conducted at a centre is usually the basis for a decision to decommission the centre. To be considered active, a centre must:

¹⁰ (LTU-3616-2018)

- comply the Guidelines for establishing centres at Luleå University of Technology;
- retain its external partners;
- have an annual turnover greater than one base price amount; and
- hold minuted steering group meetings at least twice a year.

A centre may continue for up to a maximum of two years without activity. The decommissioning of an inactive centre may be initiated in one of three ways:

- 1) The head of the host department may request decommissioning if the centre is inactive or the partners or steering committee so wish.
- 2) The Collaboration and Innovation Unit may initiate decommissioning by recommending that the vice-chancellor task the head of the host department with submitting a decommissioning plan.
- 3) The vice-chancellor may initiate decommissioning by tasking the head of the host department with submitting a decommissioning plan.

5.1.1 Prior to the vice-chancellor's decision to decommission

An application to decommission is submitted to the Collaboration and Innovation Unit at samverkan@ltu.se by the head of the host department for preparation for a decision by the vice-chancellor. The application, with associated documentation, should also be signed by the centre's operations manager and partners.

As a basis for the vice-chancellor's decision to decommission, the following documents should be submitted:

- The head of department's application to decommission the centre.
- A decommissioning plan.
- A risk-assessment and cooperation plan for staff affiliated to the centre.
- Other relevant information on which the vice-chancellor can base their decision.

An administrator at the Collaboration and Innovation Unit will ensure that the matter is prepared for a decision by the vice-chancellor.

5.2 Decommissioning of the centre

If the vice-chancellor decides to decommission the centre, the decommissioning process can begin. If there are staff whose principal employment is at the centre, the University's redundancy guidelines¹¹ must be followed.

If notice must be given on leases for premises, Internal and External Environment should be contacted for approval. A form for terminating leases is available on the Luleå University of

¹¹ LTU1348-2016 (cooperation and risk assessment are covered in these guidelines).

Technology staff website¹², where you can also find the principles for premises provision. Remove information about the centre from Luleå University of Technology's external website¹³.

Templates

The following templates are available on the internal website¹⁴ and must be used:

1. Operational Plan template
2. Budget template for use prior to a decision to develop a centre
3. Budget template for use prior to a decision to establish a centre
4. Collaboration agreement template
5. Project agreement template
6. Accounting model for centres
7. Annual follow-up template

¹² <https://www.ltu.se/internt/Tjanster-och-stod/2.55621/Lokaler-och-utrustning/Principer-for-lokalforsorjning-1.192364>

¹³ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)

¹⁴ [Centres – Luleå University of Technology](#)