

Guidelines for Life Cycle Management of University Core Facilities

This document describes the establishment of, changes to, and closure of University Core Facilities (UCFs) in accordance with the regulations entitled: "[Reglement über die Universitären Core Facilities](#)" (Art. 8, Para. 3e). This document is intended to guide:

1. Research infrastructures operating at the University of Bern who wish to apply to become an official University Core Facility.
2. Currently operating University Core Facilities (including their steering board) who will (potentially) be decommissioned.
3. The Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities in their decisions about the life cycle of a given facility.

Major revisions (i.e. extensive text changes which lead to an altered meaning and thus warrant an increase in the first digit of the document version number) of these guidelines must be approved by the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities. Minor revisions (i.e. minor text edits which do not change document content per se and only warrant an increase in the second digit of the document version number) of this document can be executed by the Coordination Office at the Vice Rectorate of Research and Innovation. A review by the Vice Rectorate of Research and Innovation Coordination Office of the document should be carried out at least every three years.

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Introduction and objectives

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Research infrastructures often develop bottom up and evolve organically over time (Figure 1).

At a certain point, such structures, labelled research facilities, may become institutional units, departmental units, faculty facilities, or a University Core Facility (UCF). Such research facilities may grow and/or change over time or be decommissioned. These units may have dedicated processes which define the establishment of such

research facilities at their level. To establish an official University Core Facility, an application must be submitted to the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities. The board can suggest to the Executive Board of the University to:

- Convert an existing research facility into a University Core Facility
- Establish a new University Core Facility from scratch
- Integrate an existing research facility into an already existing University Core Facility.
- Convert an existing University Core Facility back to a faculty/departmental/institute research facility
- Decommission an existing University Core Facility.

This document is intended to inform all research staff at the University of Bern about the life cycle process of University Core Facilities (Figure 2). In particular, these guidelines explain how a research infrastructure can apply to become a University Core Facility, the processes underpinning necessary adaptations of existing University Core Facilities or their decommission. Furthermore, these guidelines also seek to help the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities in their decisions concerning the life cycle of a given University Core Facility.

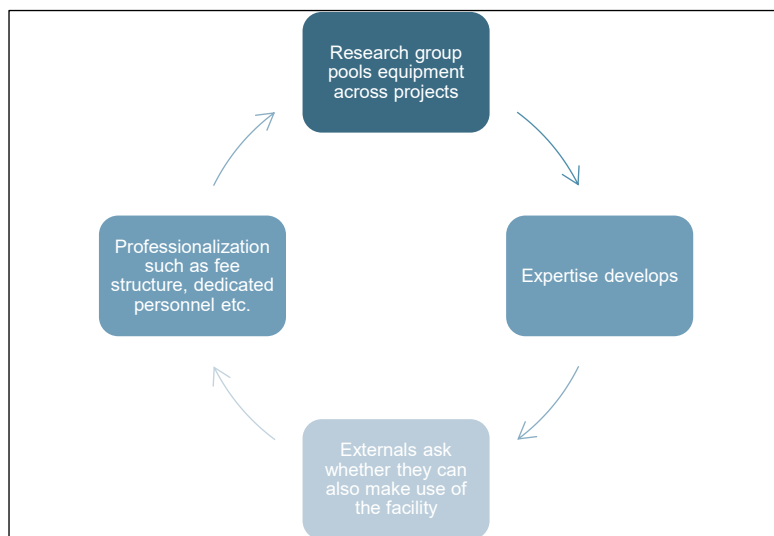


Figure 1: Typical development process of core facilities

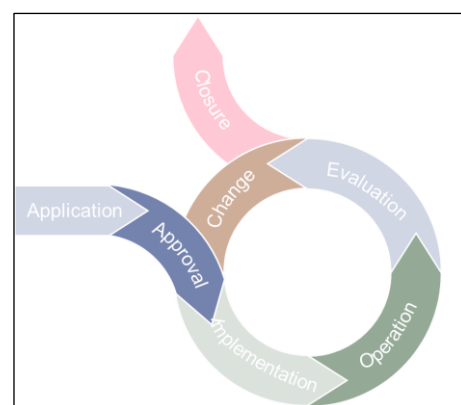


Figure 2: Life-cycle of University Core Facilities

Establishing a University Core Facility

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According to the regulations of the University Core Facilities ([Reglement über die Universitären Core Facilities](#)), a core facility is a unit whose main purpose is to provide research services. They are characterized by specialized expertise and/or infrastructure.

To establish a new University Core Facility, interested units or faculties must provide a strong scholarly rationale, a detailed strategic plan, an operational plan and a budget which will be reviewed by the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities and ultimately has to be approved by the Executive Board of the University of Bern.

To qualify as a University Core Facility, research infrastructure or research services provided by the prospective research facility must be of university-wide relevance and be in demand by users from at least two of the eight faculties at the university. Their operations, organization, and governance must comply with the requirements detailed in the regulations of the University Core Facilities ([Reglement über die Universitären Core Facilities](#)).

General process

A university-wide call for applications will be published by the Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation during October each year and applications can be submitted until March 15th of a given calendar year (later submissions will be generally postponed to the following year). The Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation must be involved as early as possible to ensure that all information and requirements for the application are available.

The general process to establish a University Core Facility, for example conversion of a faculty research facility to a University Core Facility, is depicted in Figure 3 below.

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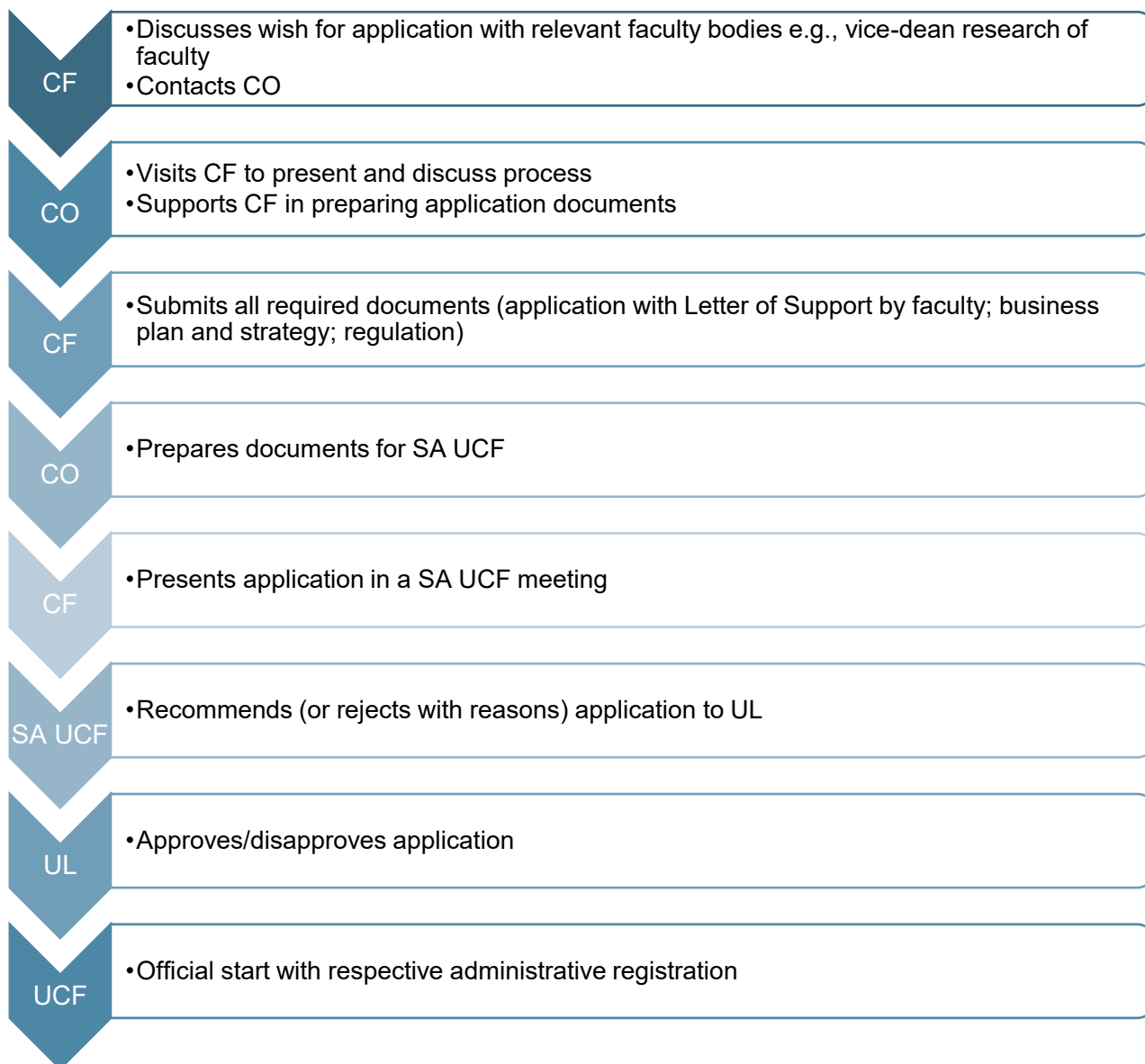


Figure 3: Process of establishing a University Core Facility

CF, Core Facility; CO, Coordination Office at Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation; SA UCF, Steering Board for the University Core Facilities; UCF, University Core Facility; UL, Executive Board of the University of Bern

Application

The application must be endorsed by the leadership of the faculty at which the future facility will be located and must include the following:

- An operational and strategic plan (i.e. a «business plan») detailing:
 - The rationale, mission, vision and objectives of the facility,
 - The services and/or infrastructure provided to the research community including proof that the facility will be fully operational with an active user base, access rules, description of the expertise and methods, an equipment list if applicable, description of consulting service/user support, and a training concept,

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- The budget of the facility including financial information demonstrating the seriousness of intent, quality of initial planning and appropriate cost sharing by users
 - Description of offices and laboratories (if applicable),
 - The pricing tariff structure,
 - A strategic outlook and a multi-year (financial) plan, including a credible plan to grow the user base,
 - A risk assessment covering at least an assessment of operational and financial risks, their mitigation, and continued monitoring (i.e., a risk management and quality management plan).
- A letter from the host faculty confirming strong support of the application. Additional letters of support from other faculties, departments, or institutes are an asset.
 - Rules of facility procedures defining appropriate governance and management structures, whereby a leadership structure, a steering committee and a body/process allowing input from users are mandatory (Art. 6 [Reglement über die Universitären Core Facilities](#)).

A proposal to establish a University Core Facility will only be presented to the Executive Board of the University if it is first deemed sufficient by the Coordination Office and the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities.

The operational and strategic plan can be in the form of a presentation or a document. The budget and financial information must be submitted in a provided spread sheet template. The application must be submitted by the applicant(s) electronically to the Coordination Office at the Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation.

It is strongly recommended that applicants seek guidance from existing University Core Facilities and liaise with the Coordination Office when preparing their application dossier.

Evaluation and decision

The Coordination Office checks whether the submitted documentation fulfills the formal criteria defined above. If all formal requirements are fulfilled, then the application will be presented at the next meeting of the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities.

The applicant(s) present(s) the application at the meeting orally followed by a question-and-answer session and a discussion. The Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities evaluates the relevance to the research ecosystem and contribution to strategic objectives of the University of Bern, the scientific added value, and financial sustainability. There are two outcomes: the board rejects an application and provides written feedback and justification for their decision, or they vote to motion forward an application for approval by the Executive Board of the University.

The Executive Board makes the final decision regarding the outcome of the application. The status of University Core Facility for accepted applications becomes effective in the following year. Resubmission of rejected applications is only possible in the following year.

Operational Level Agreement (initial)

Once a facility has been approved as an official University Core Facility, an Operational Level Agreement (OLA; template provided) is written and signed by the facility and the Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation. Thereafter, the Operational Level Agreement should be revised every four years. The Operational Level Agreement defines organizational aspects, the budget and objectives of the facility.

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Adjustments to existing University Core Facilities

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The document entitled «Guidelines for Evaluation and Reporting of University Core Facilities» describes the reporting requirements of the University Core Facilities, the internal evaluation by the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities, and the external evaluation by external experts (peer review panel). If the evaluation results are unsatisfactory, the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities may request adaptations or reorganization of the University Core Facility. These measures should be defined in collaboration with the facility-specific steering committee and coordinated by the Coordination Office. An adaptation of the Operational Level Agreement might be necessary depending on the nature and extent of the requested facility changes.

In such cases, the Coordination Office will monitor the implementation of the requested measures, and it is the responsibility of the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities to regularly examine progress as part of the internal evaluation.

Operational Level Agreement (renewal)

Operational Level Agreements should be renewed every four years. The renewal of an Operational Level Agreement will be put on the agenda of the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities approximately 12 months before its termination date. The aim is to get input from the Board on specific aspects they may want to change. Thereafter, the Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation will negotiate with the University Core Facility concerning the suggested changes¹. Before signing the Operational Level Agreement, it needs to be approved by the Board. It is signed by the facility and the Vice-Rectorate Research and Innovation.

¹ The rules of facility procedures define details about who takes on responsibility for this e.g. head, facility-specific steering board, etc.

Closure of a University Core Facility

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The Guidelines for Evaluation and Reporting of University Core Facilities describe the reporting requirements of the University Core Facilities and the evaluation criteria carried out by the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities. If the evaluation results are repeatedly unsatisfactory or for other well-justified reasons (e.g., financial reasons), the Central Steering Board for the University Core Facilities may suggest withdrawing the status as a University Core Facility. The hosting faculty is free to decide whether it allows the unit to continue its operations as a faculty, departmental or institutional facility or whether the unit should be closed completely.

The closure process is described below (Figure 4).

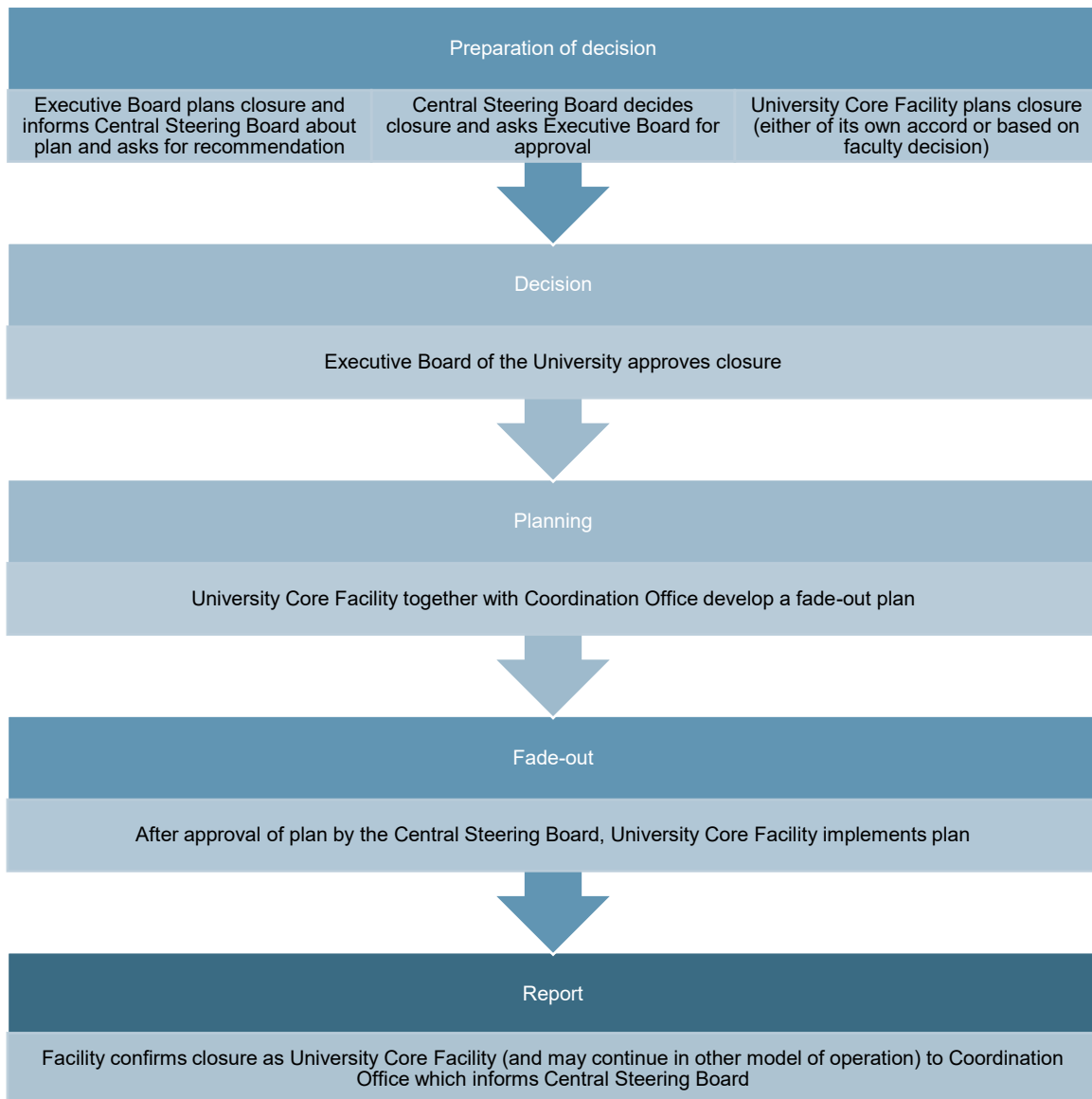


Figure 4: Process of decommissioning a University Core Facility