

Faculty of Arts
“Signature Areas of Research & Creative Collaboration”
Background Information & Answers to FAQs

Introduction

The Faculty of Arts’ Academic Strategic Plan – which was endorsed by Arts Faculty Council in November 2017 – includes a commitment to *“Develop networks of research and creative activity by identifying, developing, and promoting a set of established and emerging signature areas of research, research creation, and teaching.”* A plan for acting on this commitment has been crafted through a process of consultation that included receiving input from the Faculty’s Research Committee, the Academic Strategic Plan Committee, and Chairs Council.

While recognizing areas of established research excellence, the Faculty’s signature area initiative is designed to provide a mechanism for building research networks, facilitating collaboration, advancing cross-disciplinary research and creative activities, and enabling related teaching innovations. The initiative will, moreover, support successful grant seeking, build collective reputations, and position research networks rooted in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts to become university-wide signature areas.

In recognition of the Academic Strategic Plan’s emphasis on collaborative and cross-disciplinary research, and the Faculty’s commitment to research, research creation, and creative activity, the Faculty of Arts’ signature areas will be known as **Signature Areas of Research and Creative Collaboration**.

The identification of signature areas marks an important moment of priority setting for the Faculty. During the life of the current Academic Strategic Plan, key decisions related to resource allocation and significant matters such as the allocation and delineation of research chairs will be taken in light of the Faculty’s commitment to its signature areas.

Proposals now being accepted:

A call for the third and final wave of proposals to establish Signature Areas of Research and Creative Collaboration has been issued. Applications are due on or before **Wednesday, February 5, 2020**. Proposal forms are available in the Resources box on the signature areas website:

<https://www.ualberta.ca/arts/research/signature-areas>

Supporting the Faculty’s Signature Areas

The Faculty of Arts is committed to providing supports to its signature areas. The form and content of this support will evolve based on needs and available resources, but may include:

- Funding to support targeted teaching release and graduate research assistance.
- Working with the Board of the Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS) to develop targeted cost-shared Kule Research Team Grants to support signature area teams
- Directing the Arts Collaboration Enterprise (ACE), Arts Research Centre (ARC), and other Faculty units to provide:

- Essential administrative and communications support
- Short term space
- Meeting and conference logistics
- Web and technology supports
- Support for advancement initiatives
- Support for major grant applications
- Working with UAlberta Libraries in areas such as:
- Digital initiatives & Collections

Selection Criteria

This initiative aims to support networks of related and collaborating researchers and creative artists focused on typically cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary scholarship. Proposals must identify a small leadership team with innovative plans for research or creative activity, collaboration, and grant seeking.

Proposals will be evaluated on the following broad criteria:

- **The character of the research network:**
 - Evidence of a critical mass of committed researchers representing an impressive breadth and depth of research or creative expertise, including scholars with national and international reputations
 - Research and collaborative networks that extend across campus and beyond UAlberta are not essential, but will be viewed positively
- **Social or cultural relevance and scholarly merit:**
 - Evidence of innovative plans for socially relevant and timely research or creative activities, productive collaborations, and network building
 - Evidence of a shared research agenda of scholarly merit
- **Material benefits to the Faculty of Arts:**
 - Evidence of plans or potential for grant seeking that will advance research agendas and benefit UAlberta researchers and graduate students
- **Integration of teaching:**
 - Evidence of a commitment to the integration of teaching and research and enthusiasm for teaching innovations
- **Equity, diversity, and inclusion:**
 - Evidence of a commitment to research agendas and collaborative undertakings that advance the goals of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the academy

Adjudication

The Associate Dean (Research) will support those developing proposals for signature areas of research and creative collaboration. This may include commenting on draft submissions, helping make links between researchers with closely related or overlapping proposals, and providing strategic advice aimed at strengthening proposals.

The Faculty of Arts Research Committee will be responsible for identifying the Faculty's Signature Areas of Research and Creative Collaboration. Upon receiving proposals, the Research Committee:

- May opt to develop a short list of proposals
- May hold information sessions with leaders of key proposals
- Will seek input from Chairs Council
- Will involve the Dean of Arts in its final decision-making meeting(s)
- May invite the Vice-President (Research) or Associate VPR to attend final decision-making meeting(s)

Timelines

The signature area initiative is loosely tied to the life of the current Academic Strategic Plan. The goal is to support up to seven signature areas for a period of five years, with the first three signature areas selected in fall 2018. Additional signature areas will then be identified and launched in winter 2019 and 2020.

| Year | First Wave | Second Wave | Third Wave | Number of active Signature Areas |
|-----------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2018 | Identify first 3 Signature Areas | | | |
| 2018-2019 | Year 1 | Identify next 2 Signature Areas | | 3 |
| 2019-2020 | Year 2 | Year 1 | Identify next 2 Signature Areas | 5 |
| 2020-2021 | Year 3 | Year 2 | Year 1 | 7 |
| 2021-2022 | Year 4 | Year 3 | Year 2 | 7 |
| 2022-2023 | Year 5 | Year 4 | Year 3 | 7 |
| 2023-2024 | | Year 5 | Year 4 | 4 |
| 2024-2025 | | | Year 5 | 2 |

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

If you have questions that are not answered below, let us know at: resarts@ualberta.ca

- **What are the formal requirements associated with developing a proposal?**
 - A signature area proposal form is available on the Faculty of Arts [Signature Areas Initiative website](#). This form has space for the proposer's name, the title of the proposed signature area, and a list of members of the proposal's

leadership team. It also requests short statements of 250 to 350 words addressing each of the five selection criteria.

- Developing a proposal will require some collaborative brainstorming, information gathering, and writing time, but it is not intended to be an onerous task.
 - The Associate Dean (Research) is prepared to support those developing proposals. Please request assistance via e-mail: resarts@ualberta.ca.
 - Wave 3 proposals are due **Wednesday, February 5, 2020.**
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- **What is meant by and expected in terms of “material benefits to the Faculty of Arts”**
 - Adjudicators will be predisposed to support leadership teams whose proposals are ambitious and innovative. This will be measured in part by clarity with regard to their plans to use network building to advance research, facilitate knowledge dissemination, support creative activities, attract new graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, and benefit Arts-based researchers and graduate students.
 - An important element of this will be a commitment to grant seeking, both ongoing researcher-based applications and larger institutional applications such as SSHRC Partnership Grants.
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- **Can you explain the adjudication process?**
 - Arts Faculty Council’s Research Committee will be responsible for selecting the Faculty’s Signature Areas of Research and Creative Collaboration.
 - The Research Committee may opt to invite proposers of short-listed proposals to speak to their proposal at a meeting of the Committee.
 - The Associate Dean (Research) will, on behalf of the Research Committee, consult with Chairs Council.
 - The Research Committee may consult with appropriate Associate Deans with regard to aspects of proposals that are relevant to undergraduate or graduate teaching.
 - The Dean of Arts will participate in the final decision-making meeting(s).
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- **Can you map out the types and level of support that signature areas can expect to receive from the Faculty of Arts?**
 - Signature areas will not receive pre-set and dedicated funding. While the Faculty is committed to providing support to its signature areas, the form and content of that support will evolve based on needs and available resources.
 - The identification of signature areas will influence Faculty priorities when decisions are required with regard to matters such as the identification and selection of future research chairs.
 - Supporting the signature areas will be a priority of the Associate Dean (Research) during the life of this initiative.
 - The ADR and Faculty staff in the Arts Collaboration Enterprise (ACE), the Arts Resource Centre (ARC), and other Faculty offices will prioritize working with signature areas to ensure appropriate supports are provided to signature area research and creative undertakings.
 - Faculty support could include:

- Targeted teaching release and graduate research assistance
 - Provision of matching funds for grant applications
 - Essential administrative and communications support
 - Short term space
 - Meeting and conference logistics
 - Web and technology supports
 - Meeting data management needs
 - Support for advancement (fundraising) initiatives
 - Support for major grant applications
 - The ADR will work with the Director and Board of the Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS) to develop targeted support for signature area teams.
 - UAlberta Libraries are interested in cooperating in areas such as digital initiatives and collections.
- **What impact will supporting signature areas have on other Arts-based research and creative initiatives?**
 - The signature areas initiative will require resources and it will influence Faculty priorities and decision-making. It will not, however, supplant other factors and forces that determine strategic priorities and influence resource decisions.
- **The proposal form asks for a “proposer’s name” and a list of individuals who are a part of the proposed signature area’s “leadership team.” What is the purpose of identifying a single proposer and asking that there be a leadership team?**
 - The proposer will be the main contact person. The Proposer must be prepared to work with the Associate Dean (Research) and the Research Committee during the proposal refinement and adjudication processes.
 - This initiative aims to identify and support research networks committed to research or creative undertakings, collaborations, network building, and related activities. The success of such initiatives will require a core group of colleagues who are willing to dedicate their energies as is required for success. This is the signature area leadership team.
 - The proposer and the leadership team must be prepared to support and nurture the research networks associated with their proposed signature areas and, importantly, to work with the Associate Dean (Research) and other Faculty offices to organize supports for core research and creative initiatives.
- **Is there an expectation that researchers beyond the Faculty of Arts, and perhaps beyond UAlberta, will be involved in proposed research networks?**
 - The university-wide signature area initiative will only support cross-faculty research networks. The Faculty of Arts signature area initiative is designed to support interdisciplinary research and creative collaborations that may be located entirely within our Faculty.
 - The Faculty of Arts initiative is designed to provide a mechanism for building research networks, facilitating collaboration, advancing cross-disciplinary research and creative activities, and enabling related teaching

innovations. These must be rooted in the Faculty of Arts, but they may extend beyond.

- Research and collaborative networks that extend across campus and beyond UAlberta are not essential, but may be viewed positively
- **Is there an expectation that proposed signature areas will be well-established research networks? Is there any preference with regard to new research networks versus long-established areas of research strength?**
 - The signature areas selection criteria are not designed to favour emerging or, alternatively, long-established networks of research and creative activity.
 - The initiative is designed to support timely and productive collaborations and network building, grant seeking, teaching innovations, and other forward-looking initiatives. So, both new and well-established networks will be expected to demonstrate the value of their proposal.
 - Adjudicators will consider evidence of excellence and established success as well as the value and potential of proposals related to emerging areas. Of primary interest will be the potential for innovation, growth, and research and creative activities that will make a contribution over the next five years.
- **Can one person be involved in more than one signature area proposal?**
 - Faculty members may be involved in research networks related to multiple signature area proposals.
 - It is anticipated that faculty members would be involved on the leadership teams of no more than one proposal, but there may be exceptions to this and proposals will not be disqualified by overlap in leadership teams.
 - We would ask that individual faculty members serve as the proposer of no more than one signature area proposal.
- **What are the expectations in terms of integrating teaching into the proposed signature area initiatives?**
 - The starting point for evaluation of proposals will be the planned research and creative activities and associated networks of scholars. However, evidence of a commitment to the integration of teaching and research and enthusiasm for teaching innovations may be seen as strengthening applications.
 - In developing proposals, signature area leadership teams should reflect on the potential for new approaches to teaching, new opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching, pedagogical innovations, and so on.
 - While graduate-level teaching innovations suggest classroom-based activities, proposers should also consider the training opportunities associated with graduate student participation in research and creative activity.
- **Why the 5-year term? Given the intention to support signature areas for just five years, should proposals focus on that time frame or on the longer term?**
 - The Arts Signature Areas Initiative is loosely tied to the life of the current Academic Strategic Plan, thus the initiative is designed to run its course in a little over five years.

- Since the Faculty will support each signature area for five years, there is value in conceiving of core initiatives and needed supports within that time frame.
- Our hope is that the research and creative networks associated with the signature areas initiative will live on beyond the life of this initiative. Some may even aim to build toward funding applications, such as a SSHRC Partnership Grants, that would, by definition extend the network's activities well into the future.
- **Can you explain the notion that there will be “three waves” of signature area proposals? Will there be an entirely new intake of proposals at each wave of signature area approval?**
 - Initial applications were accepted in summer 2018 and adjudicated in fall 2018. The second and third wave of applications and adjudication will be held in the winter terms of 2019 and 2020. See the ‘timelines’ table above.
 - Unsuccessful applicants in the first and second wave are encouraged to apply in a subsequent wave. Applications will not be ‘carried forward’, so applications will need to be resubmitted. This allows for updating and revisions to the applications.
 - The plan is to identify and support 3 signature areas in the first wave and 2 in each of the subsequent waves, for a total of 7.
- **When will adjudication of Wave 3 proposals occur?**
 - The Faculty of Arts Research Committee will meet to adjudicate proposals on February 13, 2020.
 - Decisions will be announced shortly after that date.