Strategy 1. RESEARCH CLUSTERS

What are the FASS research priorities and themes?
FASS Strategic Plan 2024 - 2025
https://monash.sharepoint.com/sites/FASSstrategicplan

- FASS will "establish priority themes that strengthen our research collaborations within the faculty, across the University and beyond" in 2024-25.

- FASS will expand the scope of existing "flagship, theme-aligned centres" as a key contributor to the University's broader aspirations.
https://monash.sharepoint.com/sites/FASSstrategicplan/SitePages/Research-priorities.aspx

- The FASS plan notes that these priority themes are not fixed, and will continue to evolve over time - just as the challenges facing society will change.

- The plan emphasises the primary importance of multidisciplinary approaches to global issues and addressing "critical societal and community challenges."

- It mentions aligning FASS priority themes with the University's broader research ecosystem. Research Priorities in the University's Strategic Plan are to address "society's great challenges" and specifically lists a few examples: https://www.monash.edu/research/research-strategy-2026

Structure

Structure and Management of Clusters

- Implement **self-selecting** research clusters with appointed Chairs
- Schedule **monthly meetings** for each cluster to discuss project and funding opportunities
- Set an **annual research output expectation** for each cluster
- Clusters will be required to put basic content in a drop box for the **web**
- Ensure clusters align with **FASS research priorities and themes**

Funding Sources

- Internal funding from SACE and FASS
- Industry collaborations, sponsorships and partnerships
- HERDC/RBGC (research block) funding (in consultation with Alan)
- Actively pursue diverse funding sources as per FASS strategy

Establishment Process

- Conduct the **SCA Research morning on October 28th**
- Use the **Survey Monkey** questionnaire to gauge interest and potential cluster themes: https://uk.surveymonkey.com/r/7PVqVmq?sm=B_2FvJBFJ4R5NsZ4BnHR4ac9zcY9u4jH4Am9nd9k_2BYeaPqoiE2Ymqq7zRAqEwdc8uaw%3d
- Develop **guidelines** for cluster formation and management (see Guidelines for Research Cluster Formation, below)
- Ensure alignment with **FASS research priorities** and themes

Guidelines for Research Cluster Formation

Thematic Approach
- Staff cohort identify 5 key themes in contemporary art research and practice engaged with by SCA colleagues
  - SCA members propose and vote on these theories
- Clusters form around the most popular or strategic theme
  - For example,...
  Digital Materiality in Contemporary Art
  Sci-Art and Environmental Sustainability
  Decolonising Art Practices
  Interdisciplinary Collaborations (Art + Industry)
  Urban Art and Public Spaces
  Art and Neurodiversity
  Performative and Participatory Art
  Archival Practices in Contemporary Art

Methodological Approach
- Identify distinct research methodologies used in contemporary art practice
- SCA members align themselves with primary methodologies
- Clusters form around shared methodological approaches
- Some of these possible examples:
  Practice-led Research Focus on research where artistic practice/ process of creation is the primary method of inquiry
  Archival and Historical Research Utilising archives and historical research to inform and inform contemporary art practice or feed to curated exhibitions
  Ethnographic and Participatory Methods Involving immersive fieldwork and participant engagement, collaboration, ie socially engaged practice
  Digital and Computational Methods Utilising digital tools and technologies in art creation and analysis (AI, algorithms*, art, digital sound art, data visualisation, digital archives)
  Material-based Experimentation Focusing on exploring the properties and potentials of various materials
  Phenomenological Approaches Emphasising lived experience and sensory perception, which could use performance as a mode of inquiry and knowledge production, captured in documentation and reflexive analysis
  Critical Theory and Discourse Analysis Focusing on the critical interpretation of art and its contexts (ie self-reflexive practice), potentially resulting in critical writing or curatorial projects
  Interdisciplinary Collaborative Methods Combining methodologies from art with those from other disciplines (e.g., sciences, social sciences), (not involve a team-based research with experts from multiple fields outside of SCA

Challenge-Based Approach
- Identify key societal or artistic challenges SCA members address through their research addresses these challenges
- Clusters form around shared challenge focus. For example, some thoughts:
  1. **Climate Crisis and Environmental Sustainability** How can art engage with climate change? What sustainable materials and practices can be developed for art-making?
  2. **Social Justice and Equity** How can art address and challenge systemic inequalities? What role does art play in amplifying marginalised voices? How can we amplify marginalised voices and experiences?
  3. **Mental Health and Well-being** What role can participatory art play in community mental health?
  4. **Digital Transformation and AI in Art** How is AI changing the landscape of art creation and curation? What ethical considerations arise from the use of AI in art? How can traditional art forms adapt to digital transformations?
  5. **Cultural Heritage Preservation in the Digital Age** How can digital technologies aid in preserving and restoring art and cultural artifacts? What strategies can be developed for archiving ephemeral or fragile forms of cultural heritage? Knowledge systems be respectfully integrated into digital preservation efforts?
  6. **Urban Development and Public Space** How can art contribute to creating more livable and inclusive urban spaces? What role does art play in permanent public art/play in urban renewal? How can art address issues of gentrification and community displacement?
  7. **Cross-cultural Communication and Global Understanding** How can art bridge cultural divides and promote intercultural dialogue? What role can art play in addressing global migration and refugee issues? How can digital platforms be used to create global art communities?

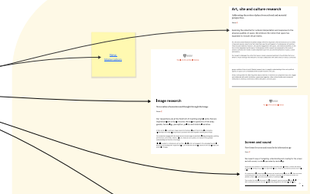
Career Stage Approach
- Form clusters based on career stages (e.g., ECR, Mid-career, Senior)
- Each cluster includes mentors from more advanced career stages
- Focus on career development and stage-specific research challenges

Flexible Magic-Hat Approach
- Allow SCA members to dip-ne names from a hat! The benefits of this approach include:
  Promoting Interdisciplinarity: Randomly assigned groups ensure that disparate disciplines are forced to find common ground, Encourages exploration of unexpected intersections between diverse art practices, Can lead to truly innovative and unique research directions
  Breaking Silos: Prevents the formation of predictable groups based on existing relationships or disciplines, Encourages interaction with colleagues who might not typically collaborate
  Fostering Community: The challenge of finding connections with randomly assigned colleagues can spark creative thinking, Encourages researchers to view their work from new perspectives, Can lead to the discovery of novel collaborations and shared interests
  Encourages Adaptability Researchers must be flexible and open-minded to work with their assigned group, Develops skills in finding common ground and adapting research interests, Fosters a sense of shared ownership and potential losses that might occur in self-selected or theme-based groups, Challenges preconceptions about who can contribute to specific research areas
  Leads to Unexpected Relationships
  Encourages Risk-Taking Pushes researchers out of their comfort zones, Fosters a culture of experimentation and innovation
  Flexible Evolution Allows clusters to adapt and evolve as needs and interests change, Potential can lead to the emergence of new, unexpected research strengths within SCA

Benefits

Potential Research Outputs

- Curated **exhibitions** in the SCA gallery based on cluster research
- **Co-authored**/ Collaborative book submissions and publications (for example, an annual presentation at AAANZ)
- Organising visiting **guest-artist**/ artist in residence programs and events (when international art-peers travel to Sydney we can 'host' them at the SCA)
- Development of **symposia** and conferences associated with your research cluster
- Research Assistant (RA) positions for each cluster (see potential funding sources below)
- Clusters can form the basis for interdisciplinary projects with **other faculties** or institutions (very desirable for FASS Strategic plan)
- Clusters can strive to create outputs that demonstrate impact on national and international communities
- Development of **external websites** and online platforms for research dissemination



Non-Research Benefits of forming Research Clusters

- Clusters could facilitate **Week 7 events** on a rotational basis
- Research Clusters can form their own **Grant Writing Support** sessions
- Clusters could organise screenings or **other events** involving HDR students where possible/ appropriate
- Clusters would have a **cross section of ECR and MCR's** to encourage collaborative projects with established researchers
- Where relevant clusters could invite colleagues from **other disciplines** to join (TAPS, the Cos, Film Studies)
- Clusters would **support early career researchers** in developing pilot projects and track records:

- Leadership Opportunities for Less Active Researchers
- Collaborative Publication Opportunities
- Shared Grant Writing
- Mentorship and Reverse Mentorship
- Flexibility in Contribution
- Career Progression Pathways
- Incremental Research Engagement
- Interdisciplinary Skill Development

Precedents

- RMIT Research Platforms
  - RMIT Research Networks
    - RMIT CAST
    - RMIT Material Assembly
    - RMIT PARS
- Monash Labs
  - Monash Monash Art Projects
  - Monash XYX Gender & Place
- UNSW Art & Design Research Centres
  - Built Environment
    - People and Place
  - Drawing Research Group
    - UK Drawing Group
  - Creative Technologies Research Lab
- SCA Creative and Artistic Practices
  - SCA Visual Art
    - New Materialism
    - Screen and Sound
    - Image Research

Working Group Research Strategy (Draft)

Andrew Sully
Madeleine Kelly
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Strategy 2. RESEARCH COORDINATOR/ FACILITATOR

Role and Responsibilities

- Member of the SACE Research Committee
- Chair the 'Building Research Capacity' working group to draft and develop the SCA Research Strategy
- Develop, guide and support the execution of SCA Research Strategy
- Foster alignment of SCA research activities with FASS goals and priorities
- Coordinate biannual SCA Research Days
- Support the annual SACE Research Day
- Support research clusters and their outputs
- Compile reports on research activities and outcomes for School, Faculty, and University leadership
- Encourage cross-disciplinary collaborations across SCA, SACE, FASS, and beyond
- Facilitate regular review and updates to the research strategy

Research Trajectory Support

- **Offer annual one-on-one consultations with each academic (20min each)**
  - Develop a supportive consultation template to ensure consistency
  - Collaboratively review previous year's achievements and set goals for the coming year
  - Identify specific support needs and resources required
  - Provide written summary and action points as a supportive follow-up

Collaborative Grant Writing Support

- Facilitate access to grant writing workshops and mentoring programs;
- Support development of database of successful grant applications as reference materials;
- Collaborate with SACE to access broader support and resources

Enhancing Research Visibility

- Digital Presence
- Showcase SCA's unique contribution to SACE and FASS's research ecosystem
- Support implementation of regular research newsletter
- Encourage use of social media platforms to share research updates and engage wider community

Learning from Other Institutions: Collaborative Benchmarking

- Support analysis of research strategies and reporting infrastructures (with RO)
- Facilitate identification of best practices that can be adapted for SCA's context
- Where appropriate, support arrangements for meetings or workshops with research leaders from other institutions
- Assist in benchmarking against FASS research priorities and themes

Improving NTRO Reporting

- Reporting Infrastructure (in collaboration with RO Joseph Toltz)
- Help develop clear guidelines for staff on reporting research activities
- Support regular research output audits
- Participate in the FASS NTRO Assessment Panel
- Assist in aligning reporting with FASS impact measurement strategies

Non-traditional research creative arts (original creative works, live performances of creative works, recorded or rendered works, and curated exhibitions or events) meet the HERDC definition of R&D activity if they fulfill all five of the following activities:

- They must be novel: aimed at new findings
- The must be creative: based on original, not obvious, concepts and hypotheses
- They must be uncertain (about the final outcome/s)
- They must be systematic (planned and budgeted)
- They must be transferable and/or reproducible