



جامعة نزوى
University of Nizwa

UoN RESEARCH POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Document Reference Number

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A blue ink signature of Professor Ahmed bin Khalfan Al Rawahi.

Professor Ahmed bin Khalfan Al Rawahi
Chancellor of the University

UoN Research Policy and Regulation

Proposed by: Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Studies, Research and External Relations Office

Approved by: Professor Ahmed bin Khalfan Al Rawahi, the University Chancellor

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I. INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE

The University of Nizwa (UoN) is committed to conducting research to achieve its mission. The Charter indicates clearly and strongly the importance of research as a tool to enhance intellectual capabilities and find solutions to various emerging problems facing Omani society in particular or other societies in general. Research is also necessary to support teaching and training of the students. The UoN's quest to lead the research agenda of the region is evident from the fact that it has spent over 50 million Rial Omani for research since its inception in 2004.

The Vice-Chancellor for Graduate Studies, Research and External Relations (VCGSRER) is the authority for managing scientific research at the university according to the approved by-laws and the present policy and regulations.

All academic and technical staff are expected and encouraged to engage in research *in their specific areas* of expertise as part of their work assignments. Research activities should be consistent with the scholarly norms and should not contravene with the ethics of the Omani society. In 2010, various research related documents were combined together as a research policy and this document is the advanced version of the same.

It is expected that the university will establish more research centers under the Deanship of Research (DoR) to address particular areas of problems relevant to the country. The university will also establish a center for consultancy to support research work, contribute to strengthening links with the society and utilize the expertise of faculty and their research results.

Research operations will also involve students through basic investigative work in the form of graduation projects and these, and training in the fields of data collection, compilation, analysis and report writing. This will enhance the students' practical capabilities and understanding of fundamental facts and problem-solving skills.

II. OBJECTIVE

This policy establishes a general framework for the conduct of research to maintain the highest standards of scholarly practice and ethical conduct.

III. PURPOSE

The aims of this policy are to:

- 1) Enhance staff research skills
- 2) Enhance research capacity
- 3) Enhance student research and training
- 4) Enhance the UoN quantity and quality of research output
- 5) Equip, encourage and motivate researchers and collaborators to conduct research.

IV. SCOPE

This regulation applies to all research conducted by a researcher belonging to or working at UoN.

V. DEFINITIONS

In applying the provisions of this policy, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning assigned to each of them unless the context requires otherwise: The below definitions are listed based on the alphabetical order of the terms.

Term	Definition
Co-Investigator	Researcher who will be involved with the Principal Investigator in the scientific development or implementation of the Project.
Conflict of Interest	A situation in which a person has a professional or personal interest sufficient to influence the objective exercise of his/her official duties.
Consultant	An expert in a specific field involved in a research project to provide scientific advice, improved implementation of research, and/or technology transfer.
Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)	A researcher who is delegated to lead the research project during the absence of the PI.
GRG	Graduate Research Grant (The Research Council grants)
E-Research System	An Online portal used to submit and manage UoN research proposal/ project activities. These include submissions by PIs, evaluations by reviewers, financial management, progress, and final reporting.
Peer Reviewer	A specialist in specific research domains. Peer reviewers act as referees to provide individual scientific assessments on "Excellence" of grant submissions.
Post-doctoral/Research Fellow	A person holding a PhD degree and involved in a research project as a full time researcher.
Principal Investigator (PI)	The researcher responsible for leading the Research Project and the Project Team.
Research Assistant (RA)	Local or non-local contract personnel hired on a term basis to be directly involved in the Research Project;
Research Project	A set of research activities approved for funding under any research agreement.
Research Proposal	A research proposal is a document proposing a research project,
Technician	An employee (part time or full time) with technical knowledge and experience, who performs full or partial scientific and technical tasks within the Research Project under the supervision of an Investigator;
URG	Undergraduate Research Grant (The Research Council Grants)

VI. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

UoN Conference Attendance Policy

UoN Intellectual Property and Copyright Policy

UoN Human Research Ethics policy

UoN Animal Research Ethics policy

UoN Biosafety Policy

VII. POLICY STATEMENTS AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. As an intellectual community, the UoN shall uphold the highest levels of ethical standards in all research related operations.
2. The Principal Investigator shall be responsible for the safe custody of all chemicals, equipment and other items purchased under his/her grant.
3. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the safe custody of the research results and shall make sure that such results are available for at least five years after completion of the study.
4. The Principal Investigator shall handover all research documents to the College Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research or Research Center or to the Dean of Research at the end of his/her employment with UoN.
5. In researches involving students, the research supervisor shall not engage in any activities that can distort the integrity of research and/or damage the research aspirations of the student. Exploitation of students in any form while carrying out research shall be avoided.
6. The use of any published or unpublished information/data shall be properly attributed.
7. Any act of academic dishonesty such as making up data, distortion, and destruction of research results or plagiarism while conducting research or other academic operations must be avoided.
8. Any commercial motives of the research work shall be conveyed to the Office of VCGSRER well in advance.
9. Any intellectual property or patent that results from research done inside the university shall be owned jointly by UoN and the Investigator. This joint ownership shall also be applicable if the work is done outside the University using UoN's resources.
10. Any serendipitous discovery that has financial and social advantage shall be conveyed to the Office of VCGSRER within two working days.

11. The progress reports during the research and the final report at the end of research shall be submitted to the Office of VCGSRER in a timely fashion.
12. The conflict of interest (CoI) situations shall be avoided in all research operations and in unavoidable cases, a letter disclosing CoI shall be submitted to the Research Board which decides on the course of action to be taken.
13. The DoR shall conduct a research needs-survey at the beginning of every academic year and organize workshops and seminars accordingly.
14. The collaborative researches conducted within and outside UoN by its faculty members shall be mutually rewarding, agreement abiding and progressive in nature. The collaborative researches shall be conveyed to the Office of VCGSRER in a timely fashion.
15. The UoN shall follow the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) to decide on the authorship of the research.
16. The Principal Investigator shall be the corresponding author of any multi-author publications. The first author shall be the researcher who has done the most contribution to the research. The second and subsequent authorships shall be given to the researchers who have contributed lower levels of contribution to the project.
17. The student shall be the first author if the research publication is materialized out of his or her graduation project/ URG/ GRG provided that he/she has a substantial contribution to that research.
18. Gift authorships and inadequate acknowledgement of the individuals who have significantly contributed to the research shall be avoided.
19. The UoN shall encourage the dissemination of research results in international and national forums and the related expenses shall be covered by respective research grants.
20. Any complaint against researchers shall be treated with strict confidentiality by UoN and in-camera investigation shall be conducted by VCGSRER to decide the merit of the complaint and future course of action.
21. The researchers shall follow the Human Research Ethics Policy or the Animal Research Ethics Policy if their research involves humans or animals.
22. Any research conducted at the national/regional level shall be initiated only after availing permission from the respective governing bodies of the Sultanate.
23. Any research, conducted by UoN researchers (even if it is non-funded) shall be conducted only after getting appropriate approval from UoN.

VIII. PROCEDURE/PROCESS

a. Process of Research Proposal Submitted for Internal Funding

As shown in Figure 1, all research proposals submitted for internal funds should pass through the College Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research to be reviewed and ranked by the College/Center prior to reaching DoR.

Consequently, DoR shall review the proposal and forward it to the UoN Research Committee for ranking, the Committee's decision shall be endorsed by VCGSRER and the final approval shall be issued by the Chancellor of the University.

Research proposals are submitted one time a year, generally at the beginning of the academic year (last week of September), and the whole process may take up to 3 months after submission.

Research proposals are approved for internal funding on the basis of set criteria specified in a later section as well as on a competitive basis as resources may be limited.

Researchers at the university are, however, urged and encouraged to seek funding from external sources where available. Acquiring external funding for research projects is considered by the UoN as an outstanding achievement and such faculty/ researchers are rewarded through merit honorariums, bonus etc.

Faculty members and specialists are encouraged to submit multidisciplinary proposals with one member of the research group serving as a Principal Investigator.

b. Process of Research Proposal submitted for The Research Council (TRC) of Oman via block funding

"The Block Funding Program (BFP) is a national research program adopted by The Research Council (TRC) in the Sultanate of Oman. This program allocates small-to-medium size research grants to support short-term and mid-term research projects in areas defined by researchers from academic and research institutions in Oman and serve the national research priority areas as well as TRC priority themes. The main goal of this program is to sustain and develop further excellence in research and to create a competitive economy through advanced and evidence –based research. To achieve this goal, TRC identifies three categories of grants namely,

- ☐ *Research Grant (RG)*
- ☐ *Graduate Research Grant (GRG)*
- ☐ *Undergraduate Research Grant (URG)" (TRC Block finding Guidelines 2018).*

The process of Research proposal submission via BFP is depicted on Figure 2

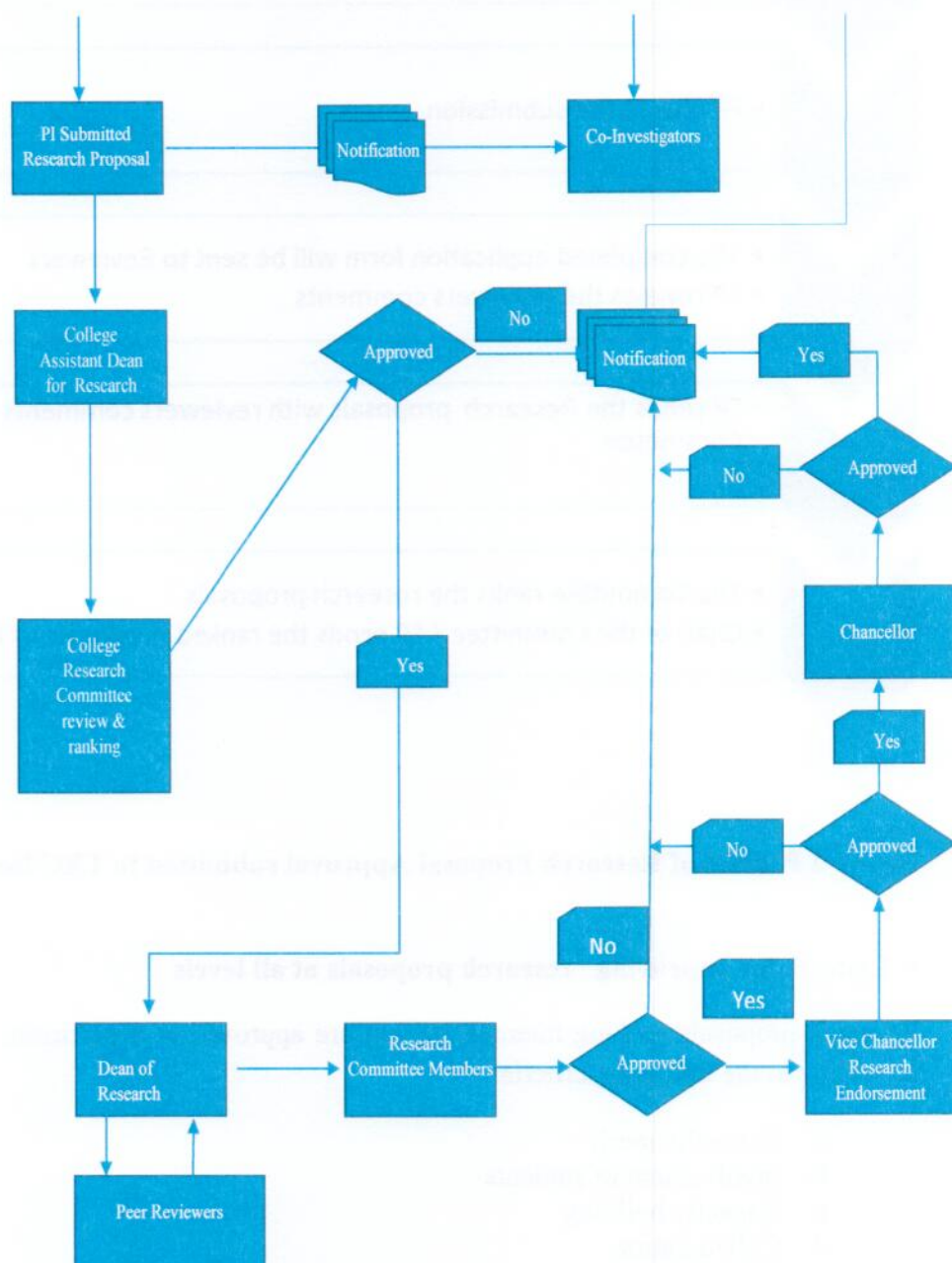


Figure 1 Flow Chart for Research Management at UoN Submitted for Internal Funding

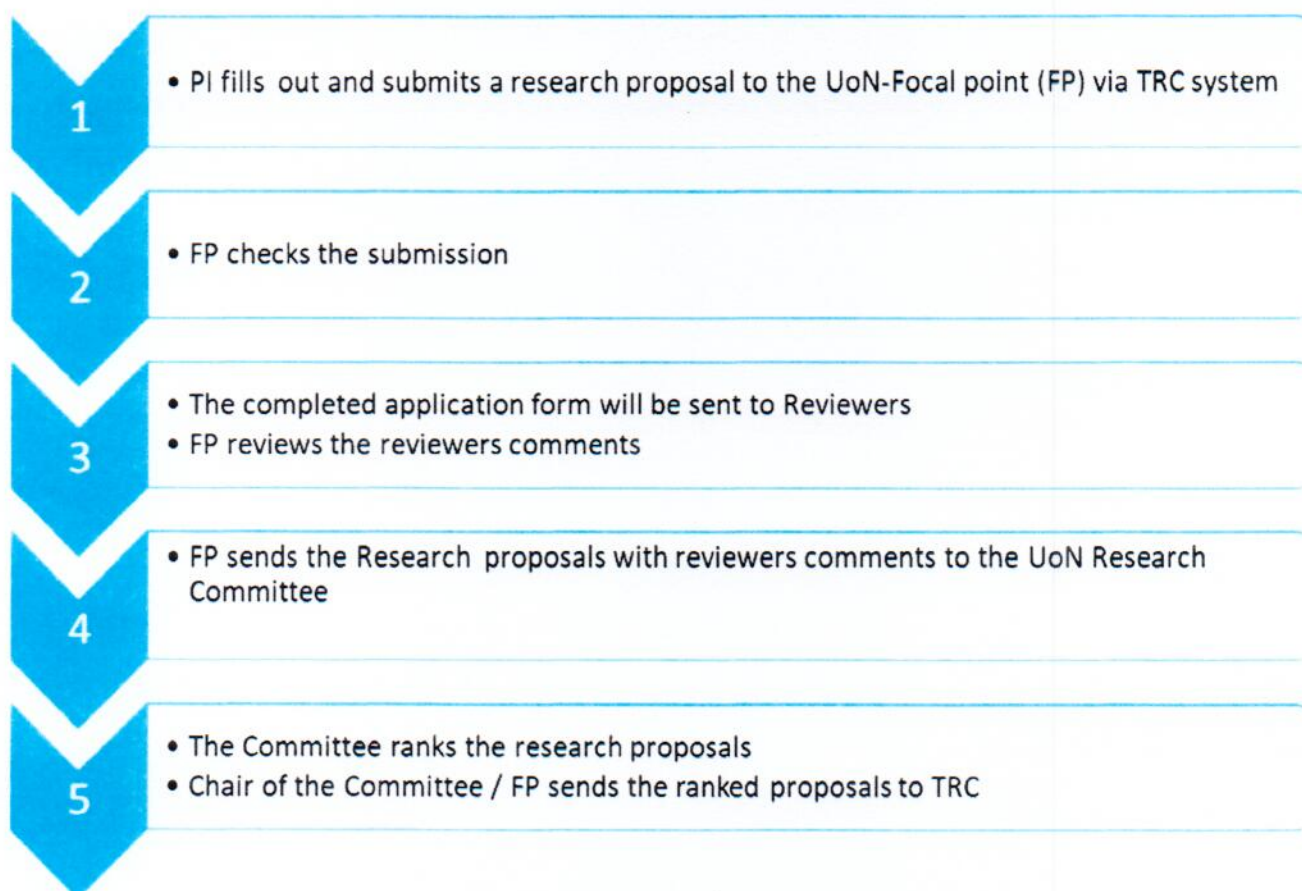


Figure 2 Process of Research Proposal Approval submitted to TRC Bock Funding Programs

c. Criteria for approving research proposals at all levels

Research proposals seeking internal funding are approved at department, college and university levels according to the following criteria:

- a. Scientific merit
- b. Involvement of students
- c. Capacity building
- d. Collaboration
- e. Interdisciplinary
- f. Compliance with ethics and biosafety
- g. Relevance to Sultanate of Oman.
- h. Experience and track record
- i. Qualifications of researchers.
- j. Priority to group proposals.
- k. Availability of funding.

Research proposals seeking external funding should comply with criteria imposed by the funding sources.

After reviews and approval of the College Graduate Studies and Research Committee and UEBGSRP, the principal investigator shall be informed of the decision. The research project is then assigned a university reference code.

d. Research Proposal Format

Research proposals seeking university funding must use UoN e-research system. The format of the research proposal is as follows.

- a. **Executive summary of the research project.**
This part briefly states the background of the study, aims, problem statement, the significance of the research to the Sultanate and a brief statement on the methodology.
- b. **Description of the proposal.**
The nature of the problem is described briefly and the plan of the proposal is stated. The relevant literature must also be included.
- c. **The objectives:** The primary and secondary objectives should be stated in a clear and concise manner.
- d. **A detailed description of methodology** must be included plus a work plan specifying activities.
- e. **Significance of the project to Oman:** The potential impact of the proposed research on the economic/social/ healthcare domains of the Sultanate needs to be included.
- f. **Research Team:** A list of all researchers with description of their duties and requested credit hours to execute research should be explicitly stated. A short summary of the researcher's personal data and commitments of each researcher should be included.
- g. **Time Frame:** List of activities and the time frame for the conduct of research should be included.
- h. **Budget:** A list of all expendable and non-expendable resources needed by the research team to execute the research and their unit and total costs. These resources include but are not limited to data collection, processing, research consultants, facilities, travel office supplies etc.

A yearly list of needed resources and costs should be given if the project needs more than one year to complete.

e. Monitoring and Implementation of financial activity

Once the researcher receives official notification that their project has been funded, a monitoring system will be initiated. The University of Nizwa shall closely monitor the fund flow of the grant to oversee what has been spent and what balance remains in each budget category.

Occasionally, there will be times when the PI's projected expenses in one or more budget categories are either significantly more or less than planned. In such cases, PI does not have the authority to change the budget. If PI needs to modify his/her budget, he/she must make a written request to the Vice chancellor for Graduate Studies, Research and External Relations. This written request and its approval must be on-file with the FM before making any changes to the budget.

The PI is responsible for verifying that all expenses submitted for payment have been paid and that there are no unauthorized payments made against his/her grant. For this reason, it is important that the PI sticks to the approved research proposal and budget.

f. Conference/ Symposium attendance. For more information, please refer to the Conference Attendance Policy

Attendance of conferences and symposia is to be included in the research budget. Approval of requests to attend conferences and symposia will require the following:

- Recommendations of the HOD and Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.
- Absence from the university will not interfere with researchers' duties at the university.
- Presentation of a paper/poster from an approved research project or to be invited as guest speaker, chair of a section or a convener of a conference
- Approval of VCGSRER.
- Approval is granted only to researchers / faculty/staff members with the approved research project

If leave is approved to attend a conference/ symposium, the researcher will receive flight tickets and per diem allowances for travel as per the university by-laws and as outlined in the research project budget plan.

g. Progress Reports

Progress reports are submitted every 6 months after final approval. Progress reports are submitted by the PI to the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research/ Unit Directors who in turn will forward it to the DoR via the e-research system.

The reports must show the achievements during the past 6 months (for a project having less than a 6-months' time span, a final report shall be submitted). They must also show any changes in planned activities as well as unexpected constraints faced in the project. Progress reports will be evaluated by the VCGSRER and results of this assessment will be forwarded to the Principal Investigator. Projects may be terminated if progress is not satisfactory.

h. Termination of the Research Project

In the event where the Principal Investigator is unable or unwilling to continue the project, and when a mutually acceptable substitute is not available, the UoN shall have the option to terminate the said project. The principal investigator must submit a detailed report highlighting the events/ reasons for such termination.

I. Final Report

Once the project is completed, the final report of the research project should be submitted by the Principal Investigator to the VCGSRER via the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research/ Unit Directors. The Deans and HoD should be informed about the completion of the project by the Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research.

The report should give detailed results of the project and all resulting publications. The final report should be submitted via the e-research system. Final reports are evaluated by internal and external reviewers. The Principal Researcher shall receive a report of this assessment from the VCGSRER. A soft copy of all the documents will be maintained for records at the VCGSRER office

j. Patents/ Copyrights and Trademarks

Every invention or discovery or part thereof that results from research or other activities carried out at University of Nizwa or that is developed with the aid of the institution's facilities, staff, or through funds administered by the UEBGSRP, shall be the property of the university and, as a condition of employment, the University shall exercise its rights of ownership of such patent(s), with or without financial gain, with due regard for the public interest, as well as the interests of inventors and external sponsors concerned.

In general, University of Nizwa is less likely to assert the ownership of intellectual property or copyrights for the materials produced by faculty as their normal teaching, research or scholarly activities unless the university has specified agreement in related cases.

All the materials produced or developed as a result of research or pursuant to any external research grant or agreement, consultancy service, copy right ownership of the materials are directly applicable to the relevant agreement.

In the absence of agreement or any assigned terms, the copyrights where materials are produced shall be the property of the university.

Whereas, the authors of the thesis shall hold the copyrights but the university as a degree awarding institution shall retain the rights of reproduction of the thesis and shall be free to publicly distribute copies of the thesis.

All the revenues received by the production of the materials produced by the university shall be distributed based on the rights of the authors and the share of university under the patent or normal laws of the university.

All researchers conducting research at UoN or related institutions should adhere to the UoN Copyright Policy and adhere to relevant laws governing copyright or intellectual property rights that exist in the Sultanate. The University of Nizwa shall promote, encourage development of marketable rights of intellectual property and shall promote understanding and awareness of these laws and related obligations.

The University Research Committee along with CCIT shall promote and evaluate the production of material discoveries and shall examine and recommend each potential patentable invention.

k. Involvement of Technicians

Some projects require participation of technicians who are available at the colleges or laboratories. There shall be a clear role for technicians who are directly/indirectly involved in research projects in terms of their assigned duties to perform certain experiments or assist the PI in review of literature, data gathering or any other computations or laboratorial tasks. Their roles and responsibilities, remuneration, deliverables, and timeframes shall be established and communicated in a clear manner prior to making any agreements in regard to their involvement in the project.

L. Acknowledgement

All the publications which are produced with the support and use of equipment, physical, financial and human resources of the University of Nizwa must include an acknowledgment of the University of Nizwa and all the concerned investigators and technicians. The recognition of the contributions is very crucial to the University of Nizwa. The acknowledgement should specify the name and the code of the grant. The UEBGSRP maintains the records of these acknowledgements. Co-authorship shall be extended to all researchers with substantial contribution.

In addition to these, the University of Nizwa shall maintain all the lists of publications produced out of the support it extended and the necessary record shall be maintained in order to help and facilitate the future financial grants. All the Principal Investigators shall be asked to forward the necessary copies of their publications that are produced out of the facilities or grants funded and facilitated by the University Research Committee.

m. External Fund Reward or Incentives for Attracting External Funding

l. 1. Statement

The Incentive Reward is designed to support faculty who are competent enough to attract external funding/ grants and sponsor research. It provides incentives to principal and co-principal investigators and their departments, colleges as a reward for their efforts in seeking competitive grant(s) and successfully acquiring external funds for the University of Nizwa.

l. 2. Responsibility

The office of the VCGSRER shall take the responsibility to provide awards and incentives to the deserving researchers. The University of Nizwa recognizes the externally sponsored academic and research activities which directly or indirectly involve the faculty and satisfy the scholarly needs of the university and the sponsoring agencies' objectives. In such scholarly activities where the

university provides the faculty the facilities and the sponsoring agencies provide grants or research or scholarly activities, these activities require significant amount of time and scholarly efforts which need to be recognized, measured and counted. It is apparent that the university should recognize the efforts to seek external grants from sponsoring agencies and the university supports faculty for these efforts, wherever it is necessary that the university should dedicate and sponsor these events for overall enhancement of academic activities.

1. 3. Recognition

The Research and Scholarly Activity Incentive Reward affirms the following:

- Supporting continued efforts to attract funded research or grant-seeking efforts.
- Rewarding active faculty engaged in funded research.
- Encouraging the faculty members to compete for external funded research
- Attracting and retaining outstanding researchers who have the ability and capacity to build and establish labs, centers and contribute to overall growth of the profession and dedication to university services.

1. 4. Mechanism

Faculty who attract external funding for research shall be rewarded for his/her time efforts as follows:

- If the attracted funds/budget include salary payments to faculty (Principal Investigator + Researchers), then 35% of salaries should go to University of Nizwa for overhead expenses and 65% to the researchers.
- If the approved budget does not include salaries for the Principal Investigator and Researchers, then the PI & Researchers will be rewarded by the University of Nizwa through the following system:
 - ✓ If the approved grant/budget is up to RO 10,000, the Principal Investigator (PI) will be granted RO 1000
 - ✓ If the grant amount is up to RO 20,000 the Principal Investigator will be granted RO 2000 or a fraction not higher than 10% of the total grant.
 - ✓ If the grant amount is more than RO 20,000, and up to RO 50,000, the Principal Investigator will be granted 10% of the total amount of the grant but not more than RO 3, 500
 - ✓ If the grant amount is more than RO 50,000 the Principal Investigator will be granted 7% of the total Grant.
 - ✓ Co-investigators will receive the equivalent of 50% of the PI reward in all the above cases as a group. They share this reward according to their contribution to the project as stated in the research proposal and approved by the University Research Committee.
 - ✓ If a researcher or academic faculty /staff services are required by an outside institution other than the university of Nizwa (approved participation in a research project outside the University of Nizwa) they will be granted for attracting external funds get the same reward as in case number (2) above and the amount of the research time is determined on the basis of thier contribution to the project.
 - ✓ A successful attraction of external funding/grants shall be treated as a significant achievement for a faculty and shall be counted towards promotional considerations.

1. 5. Procedure for payment

All payments are made on a yearly basis as follows:

- ✓ For projects taking more than one year, a yearly reward is calculated on the basis of the total amount of the reward divided by the number of years of the project as approved by the University Research Committee. Payments are made at the end of academic year. The last payment is made at completion of the project.
- ✓ For projects lasting a year or less, the payment of the reward will be made after completion of the work.

1.6. Ownership of and Responsibilities for, Facilities, Equipment and other Resources Obtained Through Internal and External Grants

All facilities, equipment and other resources obtained through internal and external grants are owned by the University of Nizwa during and after the completion of research projects.

1.7. Integrating Research into Teaching

Integrating research into teaching has become an important issue that needs emphasis and attention to improve student learning outcomes. UoN has taken several initiatives in order to achieve a productive relationship between research and teaching. The university considers research activities as a part of teaching and therefore all the departments should integrate research into teaching to stimulate the critical and analytical skills of the students. UoN adopts a culture where experienced research-active staff are engaged in teaching across all levels in a balanced manner. Moreover, it is mandatory that faculty members need to be research-active so that their teaching skills will be enhanced. An academic staff member can have a maximum of 30% of the total workload to conduct research.

The university departments should stimulate students' critical thinking by providing them with research training across all the research centers including DARIS Research Centre, Chair of Herbal Medicine, Chair of Material Sciences and through other individual research projects.

Research-teaching nexus should be achieved through:

- 1- Students and faculties collaboration in research projects
- 2- Carrying out faculty-mentored undergraduates research, awards and publications
- 3- Enhancing conference participation of students.
- 4- Encouraging research field trips
- 5- Encouraging students to exhibit their research projects to the UoN community on University Research Day and UoN Annual Cultural Week

IX. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal Investigator:

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for drafting, submitting and amending his/her research proposal. This equally includes managing and leading his/her Research Project to accomplish approved objectives.

Peer Reviewers:

Should act as referees and provide independent scientific assessment and comment on the quality of grant submissions.

Research Committees (College/Center/UoN):

The Committee Chairs and members perform the following tasks:

1. Evaluate the “relevance” of research proposals;
2. Recommend proposals for funding based on the results of “excellence” and “relevance” evaluations provided by the peer reviewers;
3. Provide technical advice, when requested by the Chancellor’s chancellor office.

Deanship of Research (DoR):

The DoR has the following responsibilities:

1. Organize meetings in liaison with VCGSRER office;
2. Ensure conformity of proposed budgets with the rules and regulations;
3. Prepare “Letters of Acceptance” for approved research grants and coordinate their endorsement;
4. Ensure project execution compliance with UoN rules and regulations;
5. Approve or reject PI’s requests. These include:
 - a. Change of any member, except the PI, of project team;
 - b. Fund movement between budget categories within the same year;
 - c. Monitor and approve fund movements from one year to another
 - d. Any other related transactions.

Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research:

The College Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies and Research has the following responsibilities:

1. Approve/Reject application for internal grants only (not for TRC grants) at college/ center/ unit level in coordination with other members
2. Update the Dean about approval or disapproval of an application
3. Oversee all the processes related to research
4. Act as a contact point between the College and DoR
5. Ensure the quality of submission, review and approval of submitted research proposals
6. Receive research proposals and carry out an initial screening to check completeness and compliance of submissions with UoN rules and regulations
7. Select peer reviewers and coordinate “excellence” and “relevance” evaluations of research proposals submitted for funding
8. Ensure the absence of conflicts of interest in reviews and evaluations of research proposals

9. Provide directions on how to deal with any sensitive questions that may arise during the course of the submission and evaluation process, including those related to possible conflicts of interest
10. Provide technical advice to DoR and/or PIs in order to facilitate efficient conduction of research projects;
11. Organize college/ centers/ units' meetings
12. Prepare evaluation reports for all research proposals
13. Approve/ reject the research progress/final project reports as deemed appropriate/ inappropriate.

VCGSRER:

1. Chair the Research Committee Meetings
2. Endorse the decisions of the Research Committee.

Chancellor:

Grant final approval to conduct research.

X. HISTORICAL RECORDS

- This Policy was drafted by the Office of VCGSRER and revised by the DoR
- It was edited by Dr. Mohamed Ismail, Pro-VCAA
- It was approved by the UEB in Meeting 1/S2020, dated 18th February, 2020.