



Center for Advanced Studies in Water

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

for

Research Management Unit (RMU)

**Mehran University of Engineering & Technology
Jamshoro**

SOP Control Information

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Communication Plan

This SOP will be communicated in hard and soft format to all concerned.

Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to the Research Management Unit (RMU) at USPCAS-W, MUETJamshoro and it is meant to cover full spectrum of activities falling in the domain of this unit.

Purpose

This SOP describes policies, procedures and key processes, along with allocation of responsibilities and time lines, for management of research portfolio of the center. This unit is responsible for managing the center-funded research projects and it will also act as facilitator for the donor funded research projects.

DONOR FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

Under this component, the RMU will concentrate on implementing applied research agenda of the center by way of attracting funding from external resources. SOPs for this component are given below:

- Maintain active liaison with center's faculty to motivate and facilitate faculty members in development of research proposals for external funding.
- Plan and organize periodic training programs in research project proposal formulation
- Facilitate faculty members in submission of research projects to different funding agencies on their need.
- Schedule faculty meetings on regular basis for planning and review of research to help advance the research agenda of the center.
- Provide guidance to Center's faculty in identifying and responding to emerging research needs.
- Coordinate the efforts of research teams established within the Center and monitor their progress against established benchmarks.
- Share opportunities for collaboration with other institutions and researchers beyond the center.
- Maintain record of the donor funded projects and prepare periodic status reports including the name of PI, project titles, funding agency, and budget and duration of the project
- Faculty must submit copy of research proposal, periodic reports, and final report to RMU for donor funded project

CENTER FUNDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

It includes call for proposals, research project grant applications, review and approval policies including contract agreement, documentation and tracking of progress, and monitoring and evaluation of the ongoing and future projects. This will be done by integrating the roles and responsibilities of RMU, FGM (Finance and Grants Management) unit, as well as those of the Project PIs, and the regulatory role of the Research Grants Management Committee (RGMC) and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.

Overall role of the center and that of the university authorities is also given due coverage.

Research Projects Grant Process

Call for Proposals

1. RMU is responsible to conceptualize the need for inviting research proposals on specific theme(s) from the intended clientele based on the availability of funds for the purpose.
2. The Convener RMU will hold a meeting with the Project Director, discuss the need for inviting research proposals on specified themes, and obtain his approval to initiate the process for placing a fresh "Call for Proposals" in newspapers and on the website.
3. The RMU will prepare a "Draft Call for Proposals" thereby clearly defining the content, research themes the proposals are being invited for, who is eligible to apply, maximum amount and the period the project can be funded for and the dead line for submitting applications etc.
4. The "Call for Proposals" should clearly specify the website link from where the applicants can download the Research Grant Application Form. Any guidelines and procedures to be followed by the applicants may also be shared.
5. The RMU office will update the existing "Research Grant Application Proforma" based on current policies and requirements, if required. This Proforma should clearly specify the nature of information needed against each item of the Proforma.
6. The RMU will obtain approval of the "Call for Proposals" and the "Research Grant Application Proforma" from the Project Director before placing these on the center website.
7. After approval, the "Call for Proposals" will be sent for publication in the name of Deputy Director (Academic and Research) in one English, one Urdu and one Sindhi language newspaper. The deadline for receipt of applications should be at least 4 weeks and preferably 6 weeks from the date the advertisement appears in the newspapers.

General Guidelines for Applicants

Applicant Eligibility

All registered Research Institutes, Universities (HEC approved), Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) with minimum of 5 years' experience in applied and policy-oriented research related to water issues are eligible to apply for research grants. The private organizations (NGOs/CSOs) must at least be registered for a minimum period of 5 years prior to applying for the research grant program.

Project Duration

1. The projects funded under this grant are required to be completed within one year, but it will be possible to consider extension for 3-6 months depending upon the nature of the project and justification provided by the applicant. For this, awardee must apply in writing at least three months (or one-fourth of the project period) prior to the termination date of the agreement.
2. If a “Call for Proposals” puts a bar on extension of the project period or specifically defines the possible extension period, then it will supersede the above provision.

Project Budget

1. Maximum amount permissible for each research grant is Rs. 3.00 million inclusive of 1% audit fee which is retained by the center for project audit. Total amount of the project is not subject to revision even if the project duration is extended.
2. The Center policy allows for payment of Honorarium of Rs. 150,000 to PI and Rs. 100,000 to Co-PI (if any) of the project.
3. The center encourages the PI to include some budget (Rs. 100,000 to 200,000) for organizing a national workshop/seminar with the objective of sharing and dissemination of the results, discussion with subject experts and networking, and to determine future plans to advance research in the field of investigation. The venue of the workshop/seminar is to be decided in consultation with the center.
4. Guidelines for procurement of expendable and non-expendable equipment, and other budget heads are given in the application Proforma. Normally, the budget for non-expendable equipment/material should not exceed 40% of the total cost of the project. It will require justification and special approval if the budget requirement under this head exceeds to 50-60%. Any amount in excess of the allowable limit under this head will not be granted.

Payment Schedule

The US-PCASW will disburse the funds to awardee in four installments as per the following schedule. Further details of budget release are elaborated in the contract agreement.

Installment	Percent of total budget	Outputs/Due Date
1	35	On signing the agreement
2	35*	2 nd QPR (mid-term Report) evaluated and approved
3	15*	On submission of Draft Final Report
4	15*	On submission of Final Report and its evaluation and approval. Audited expenditure statement of the project required before release of the final installment.

- **Next installment will be released after deduction of the previous unspent amount reflected in the audited expenditure statement.**

Application Process

1. The applicants are required to send filled-in Research Grant Application Forms in soft copy on the email indicated in the Call for Proposals by the deadline mentioned in the advertisement and three hard copies by postal mail to: The Manager Research, US-Pak Center for Advanced Studies in Water, Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro.
2. In case it is felt necessary to extend the deadline for receipt of applications, the Manager Research will move the matter in writing, at least three days before the announced deadline to the Deputy Director (Academic and Research) for his approval of one time extension of up to two weeks in the deadline. This is to be done under intimation to the Project Director.
3. The RMU will acknowledge the receipt of each application to the concerned PI by return email the same day but no later than three working days of its receipt.
4. The RMU will also scrutinize each application for its completeness (against a check list prepared by RMU for the purpose) and notify the concerned PI within 3-5 working days for fulfillment of any deficiency/ missing information etc. The PI is required to comply with it within a period of 5 working days.
5. The RMU is responsible for maintaining track record of entire correspondence and also for maintaining a file containing hard copies of emails as well as that of original proposals.

Proposal Evaluation and Award Process

Evaluation and award process will entail the following steps.

1. The RMU will notify applicants about the duration of the review process which should not be more than three months from the deadline of the receipt of proposals and it should also be displayed on the website.
2. The RMU shall start the process for review of proposals (as per checklist requirements) from the date the proposal is received and should not wait for the deadline.
3. Incomplete applications or those failing to comply with the requirements spelled out in the 'Call for Proposals' or in the 'Application Form' will not be entertained.
4. The RMU shall prepare and maintain a panel of subject experts belonging to different disciplines and different institutions falling within the domain of HID, IWRM, EnvEng, and WaSH programs.
5. Each proposal shall be reviewed by two relevant subject experts to be proposed by the Manager Research from the existing panel of reviewers and approved by the

Deputy Director (Academic and Research). OR the Deputy Director may use his discretion to approve other reviewer(s) either from the exiting panel of subject experts or by identifying suitable expert(s) other than those listed in the panel.

6. The proposals should be sent to the reviewer by email as well as by postal mail with clear message that evaluation report is anticipated within two weeks and no later than four weeks in any case. The center shall provide evaluation proforma to the selected reviewer for the purpose.
7. Each reviewer shall be paid an honorarium of Rs. 8000 if the proposal evaluation report is received within two weeks from the date of receipt of the proposal by the reviewer. If evaluation report is received after two weeks and before four weeks, the reviewer will receive honorarium of Rs. 5000.
8. If no evaluation report is received by the end of four weeks, the RMU shall process the matter for selection and approval of alternate reviewer. This process, along with sending the proposal to alternate reviewer, should be completed within five working days after the expiry of four week period of the previous reviewer.
9. The Manager Research will send all the research grant applications/project proposals to the two external reviewers appointed by the competent authority as per clause -----.
10. The reviewers will evaluate the proposals using the proposal evaluation proforma and send their evaluation report on this Proformato the Manager Research preferably within two weeks but no later than four weeks.
11. In case Proposal Evaluation Report is not received within two weeks from any reviewer, the Manager Research will remind the concerned reviewer(s) in writing and request for sending the evaluation report by the end of four weeks of receipt of the proposal by the reviewer. It should be clearly mentioned that the proposal will be sent to another reviewer if the evaluation report is not received by the end of four weeks.
12. The reviewers' comments received by RMU will be shared with the concerned PI:
 - (i) If the proposal is recommended/accepted without modifications by both the reviewers, then PI is to be notified about the approval of his/her proposal. This is, however, subject the condition that the budget and budget breakup conforms to the policies of the center. The RMU will look into the budget section and send comments to the PI for modifications as necessary.
 - (ii) If the proposal is recommended by one reviewer but rejected by the other, then the proposal is to be sent to a third reviewer appointed by the competent authority.
 - (iii) If the proposal is rejected by both the reviewers, then the PI will be notified accordingly within five working days of the receipt of review reports from both the reviewers.
 - (iv) If the proposal is recommended/ accepted conditionally i.e. it requires some modifications/ amendments as proposed by the reviewer(s), then PI is to be informed accordingly and asked for submission of revised proposal in the light of the comments/suggestions made by the reviewer(s), within a period of 15 days. If no response is received from the PI within 15 days, then entire process

will be stopped and the proposal will be withdrawn for any further consideration unless the PI justifies the delay.

- (v) After receipt of revised proposal and reply to reviewer(s) comments from PI, the RMU will review it to ensure that the reviewer(s) comments have been satisfactorily incorporated in the proposal and that the budget and the budget breakup meets the center guidelines/policies in this regard.
- 13. The final decision on the revised proposal and 'PI replies to reviewer(s) comments' will be made by RMU and that PI will be notified for any further technical and/or budgetary changes that are required to be made in the revised proposal. After receipt of re-revised proposal and reply to comments from the PI, the proposal will be evaluated again by RMU and same process will be followed as discussed earlier. If the proposal fulfills the comments made or justifies by way of reply to the comments, the PI will be notified by RMU for acceptance of his/her proposal for funding, subject to approval of the Research Grants Management Committee (RGMC) of the Center .
- 14. Once the proposal is accepted for funding, the PI is to be asked to send Inception Report on customized template preferably within one week but no later than 2 weeks.
- 15. RMU will evaluate the Inception Report received from the PI. In case there are any comments, the PI will be asked to comply with these within a period of five working days.
- 16. After satisfactory revision of the project proposal, budget and the Inception Report, the matter shall be referred to the Research Grants Management Committee (RGMC) for formal approval of the proposal, both technical and financial.

Award of the Project to Applicants

Following the approval of the research proposal, grant amount and the Inception Report by RGMC, PI will be issued formal Award Letter and approved Budget along with budget breakup under the approval of the Deputy Director (Academic and Research).

- 17. Subsequently, the PI will sign Contract Agreement with the USPCAS-W. All concerned signatories will sign two copies, one for PI and the other for record keeping at the center. The selected institution/PI will be required to administer the grant amount in accordance with the conditions spelled out in the agreement.
- 18. After signing of Contract Agreement, PI is required to open a separate bank account dedicated in the name of the project which is to be operated jointly by the PI and the head of PI's institution (or his/her designated official).
- 19. First release of budget to the PIs will be made after obtaining administrative and financial approval of the projects and their budget. The matter will be moved by the Deputy Director (Academic and Research) through the Project Director for approval of the Vice Chancellor/ Chairman Board of Governors of the Center.
- 20. Subsequent releases of budget will be made in accordance to the provisions of the Contract Agreement signed between the PI and the Center.

Quarterly Progress Reports and Final Report

21. Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs) as well as Financial Statements become due at the end of each quarter of the project period. For example, if project period is 18 months, then QPRs will become due after every four and half months after the starting date of the project specified in the contract agreement.
22. Based on the date of start of the project and total project period, RMU will determine QPR schedule specific to each project and the PIs will be notified about the QPR schedule each PI is required to follow. It will also include the due date for Draft Final Report of the project.
23. Each PI is required to regularly submit the QPRs along with the Financial Statement of applicable period to the Manager Research.
24. The RMU will develop a system whereby automatic email reminders are sent to the PI two weeks (1st Reminder) and one week (2nd Reminder) before each QPR due date.
25. The QPR and the Financial Statement received from the PI will be reviewed and evaluated by RMU against the targets and activities committed to be completed as mentioned in the Inception Report.
26. Any comments and suggestions on the QPRs and Financial Statements will be communicated to the PI within two weeks of the receipt of QPR under the approval of the Deputy Director (Academic and Research).
27. Wherever applicable, the PIs are required to respond to the comments and suggestions to the Manager Research, overall objective being to ensure smooth progress of the project in line with the activities and targets along with timelines committed in the inception report.
28. Second QPR of the project will be considered as Mid-Term Report and it should cover cumulative progress made during the first two quarters.
29. Instead of 4th QPR, the PI is required to submit Draft Final Report of the project thereby summing up all the activities performed, and targets achieved during the project period. The Draft Final Report becomes due one week before the end of the project period or as mentioned in the contract agreement.
30. The Draft Final Report will be evaluated by one subject expert to be appointed from amongst the panel of subject experts by the Deputy Director (Academic and Research). The procedure for appointment of subject expert/ reviewer of the Final Reports will be same as for the evaluation of original research proposals described under Items ---- to ----. The exception to this is that only one reviewer will be appointed for review of the Final Report.
31. The RMU shall provide Final Report Evaluation Proforma to the selected reviewer for the purpose.
32. The reviewer will evaluate the proposals using the Final Report Evaluation Proforma and send his/her evaluation report on this Proforma to the Manager Research, preferably within two weeks but no later than four weeks.

33. In case the Evaluation Report is not received within two weeks from the reviewer, the Manager Research will remind him/her in writing and request for sending the evaluation report latest by the end of four weeks of receipt of the Report by the reviewer.
34. If no evaluation report is received by the end of four weeks, the RMU shall process the matter for selection and approval of alternate reviewer. This process, along with sending the Final Report to alternate reviewer, should be completed within five working days after the expiry of four week period of the previous reviewer.
35. The reviewer shall be paid an honorarium of Rs. 8000 if the Evaluation Report is received within two weeks from the date of receipt of the Final Report by the reviewer. If evaluation report is received after two weeks and before four weeks, the reviewer will receive honorarium of Rs. 5000.
36. The Evaluation Report received from the reviewer will be looked at by RMU and the PI will be asked for revision of the Draft Final Report in the light of the comments/suggestions received from the reviewer. The PI will also be asked to ensure that the report follows the format determined and communicated by the Center, including the style of the front page, acknowledgments, content organization, font type and size etc.
37. After incorporation of comments and suggestions made by the reviewer and following the format requirements, the PI will send it to the Manager Research as Final Report.
38. The Final Report received from the PI will be reviewed in-house by the RMU to ensure incorporation of the comments and suggestions of the reviewer and proper formatting of the report as required.
39. If the Final Report meets the requirements as above, then letter of acceptance of the report will be sent to the PI.
40. Final payment will be made to the PI on acceptance of the Final Report by the center and on receipt of the audited financial statement from the PI. The amount will be adjusted after deduction of the previous unspent amount reflected in the audited expenditure statement.
41. The PI and Co-PI will qualify to draw their honorarium from the project account after approval of the final Report.