

Deanship of Research Fund

1. Introduction and Rationale:

Deanship of Research Fund is a new funding scheme intended to support researchers with small grants. Small grants are an important part of research support available in institutions of higher education the world over. They are often employed to support research projects that explore novel areas in their fields, perform preliminary research work that is fundamental to more extensive future investigations, and/or to facilitate inter-disciplinary research projects. They are generally short-term in nature, usually offering support for around one year, and often have relatively small available budgets when compared to full research funding. The limited timeperiod and budget available through these small grants can encourage researcher creativity, flexibility and ingenuity in pursuing research goals. These funds can also be an effective means of encouraging “grassroots” research work at an institution and, by doing so, can build research calibre and dynamism while offering vital financial support even during times of economic difficulty.

The proposed Deanship of Research Fund will provide financial support for faculty and researchers at Sultan Qaboos University who wish to pursue research projects of up to one year in duration. Funding of up to 3,000 OR (depending on the availability of the fund) will be made available to researchers from all SQU colleges and research centres, with applicants being from small research teams. The research supported by the fund will usually be of a relatively small scale, though may form the basis of future research studies of a more extensive nature. Applications are open all year and are evaluated two times a year in accordance with the process and responsibilities detailed below.

2. Budget Allocation and Sustainability.

Deanship of Research Fund will be derived from the unused funds allocated to SQU's Internal

Grants or His Majesty's Trust Fund at the end of every year. The total budget allocated for this fund might vary from one year to another. As such, the total number of projects that can receive financial support through this fund every financial year might vary as well. Researcher expenditures in these areas will be overseen by the Deanship of Research.

3. Terms and Conditions.

- The research team of the deanship of research fund project should consists of at least two researchers – a PI and a Co-PI.
- PIs cannot have more than one deanship of research fund project per year.
- The maximum amount for a project is 3,000 OR.
- Deanship of research funds cannot be used to appoint consultants or to apply for a research visit and/or conference.
- The following may be funded from the funds allocation:
 - Equipment
 - Temporary manpower
 - Consumables, Supplies and materials
 - Data collection costs
 - Dissemination

4. Application and Approval Procedures.

Applications are open all year and should be submitted according to the following steps:

- The PI should complete and submit an application (F1 and F2 forms) signed by the PI and the HoD to the Assistant Dean for Postgraduate Studies and Research (ADPSR) or to the Director of the Centre (DC) for endorsement by the College Research Committee (CRC) or by the Research Center Research Committee (RCC).
- The ADPSR shall submit the recommendations of the CRC to the Dean of the College for endorsement before submission to the Deanship of Research (DR). For the research centres, the Chair of the RCC endorses the RCC recommendations and sends the application to the Deanship of Research.
- All initially approved applications by the CRC or the RCC will then be re-evaluated by an evaluation committee that will be formed by the Deanship of Research. The committee will meet two times a year. The evaluations will be based on a set of criteria that includes:
 - Scientific merit
 - Feasibility within the budget and time limits
 - Originality
 - Clarity

- Potential practical significance
- Budget
- Potential to evolve in strategic or wider scale research project
- The Deanship of Research will obtain approval for the proposal from the DVC-PSR.
- Researchers will be notified of the status of their applications within a two-week period following the committee's meetings.
- The final approved proposal will be assigned a code at the Deanship of Research and the deanship will send an approval letter to the PI to commence the project

5. Managing the Fund.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research will oversee the management of the Deanship of Research Fund. The Deanship of Research is responsible for the administrative and financial oversight of all the funding activities.

5.1 Duration of Projects.

The maximum duration for a small grant fund project is 12 months.

5.2 Project Extension and Budget Top-up.

Project extension and/or budget top-up are not allowed. Any awarded amount not spent during the project period will be returned by the Deanship of Research to the overall Deanship of Research Fund.

5.3 Project Reallocations

Reallocations between budget items are possible subject to the approval of the CRC/RCC.

6. Reporting Results.

All recipients of deanship of research funding will be required to complete a final report to the Deanship of Research within 60 days from the end of the funding period. The report will contain details of the research achievements during the funding period, the milestones reached, research outputs, and the way the budget has been spent. All reports will be checked by the Deanship of Research who will contact researchers if any information is missing or to clarify any areas of uncertainty before issuing final approval. Failure to submit a report

within the prescribed time period will negatively influence the researcher's chances of accessing SQU supported research funding in the future.

7. Potential Opportunities.

Opportunities associated with the proposed fund are as follows:

- The fund has the ability to highlight to SQU faculty, staff and students, and to the Omani community at large, SQU's commitment to supporting research and innovation even in a challenging economic environment.
- Small scale projects supported by the fund can act as a foundation for more extensive research work that recipients may wish to pursue in the future either independently or with the assistance of other SQU, local, regional, or international funding bodies.
- SQU's commitment to research as expressed through this fund will increase research output in terms of academic papers and citations, thereby having a positive impact on the university's ranking.

8. Potential Risks.

Risks for the proposed seed funding are minimal, but may be conceived of as including the following:

- The limited amount of funding available is somewhat lower than similar small grant funding projects in universities around the world.
- The fund may not be attractive to researchers in fields which typically require higher levels of financial support (i.e. the natural sciences).
- The annual IG and HM budgets may not have an adequate surplus to contribute to the seed fund.

Works Consulted.

Brown University. (2016). Research seed funds guidelines. Available at:
<https://www.brown.edu/research/conducting-research-brown/finding-funding/internalfunding-opportunities/research-seed-funds-guidelines>

University of California. (2015). Research seed funding program. Retrieved from <http://research.uci.edu/research-funding/find-funding/seed-funding/index.html>

University of Florida. (2016). Office of Research: Internal competitive funding. Available at: <http://research.ufl.edu/faculty-and-staff/finding-funding/internal-competitive-funding.html>