

**KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI, GHANA**



**GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR CONCEPT NOTE
AND PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT**

Office of Grants and Research

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

As the competition for research funds intensifies, researchers in a research design process must endeavour to make their research proposals and concept notes persuasive. The research proposals or concept notes are meant to: a) identify and describe the work that requires research attention, b) explain why the work needs attention, and c) persuade the prospective funder(s) that the researchers are qualified and have adequate motivation for the work, and have a good management plan and technical approach. The clamour for problem-based research proposals in recent times implies that a number of researchers from different disciplines, must collaborate to develop a research proposal or concept note that meets the fore-stated objectives.

However, developing a multi-disciplinary research proposal or concept note can be time-consuming and frustrating if the Principal Investigators are not informed about their institutional procedures for developing a research proposal or concept note. The purpose of these guidelines, therefore, is to inform relevant stakeholders about the steps and responsibilities of principal actors in research proposal or concept note development.

2.0 STEPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Minimum size of grant (incl. full KNUST Overheads): Currently, the minimum size of grant allowed is **USD 10,000 per year**. However, this can be determined on a case-by-case basis considering the nature of activities and administrative requirements of the proposed project.

For large scale research proposals (for funding), a multidisciplinary proposal development team may be formed and a timeline for the preparation of the proposal set up, in order to meet the technical (including administrative) and financial requirements of the application.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the lead person to inform the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) as soon as a decision is made to develop a proposal.

1. The OGR identifies a request for proposal (RFP) or receives one from a staff member (including Heads of Development, Deans and Directors of Schools, Faculties and Research Centres and Provosts of Colleges) and distributes it widely to all research and administrative staff. The Office of the Vice Chancellor will be included and copied all messages as appropriate.
2. The OGR acts on the recommendation of Vice Chancellor on approval basis, and informs the research community within 48 hours indicating internal deadline for submission of proposals to the OGR for follow-up reviews.
3. When a Head of Department/Director of Research Centre, Dean of Faculty/School and Provost agree that a proposal or Concept Note (CN) is to be developed, the lead staff informs the OGR, to enable them prepare in writing and packaging of the proposal. Staff are encouraged to extend invitation to other colleagues with relevant and diverse disciplinary backgrounds to contribute to the proposal development. It is highly recommended that the lead staff seeks inputs from the Finance Department for the budget preparation.
4. If only one proposal can be submitted from KNUST in response to a particular RFP, proposals prepared by various teams will undergo an internal selection process where the Vice Chancellor, on the recommendation of the Director of OGR, selects KNUST's proposal. Procedures for the internal selection process are outlined in Procedures and Selection criteria, (See policy on **Proposal and Grant Award Acceptance and Registration**).
5. The staff/teams concerned develop the concept note or proposal with inputs from the relevant units. In cases where no format exists, staff should use the KNUST's proposal templates, (see Principal Investigators Handbook).
6. On or before the internal deadline, staff/proposal development teams submit to the OGR a final version to be reviewed by a Head of Department/Director of Research Centre, Dean of Faculty/School and Provost on the day or before the internal deadline (usually not less than 96 hours or 4 working days) before the

funder's deadline. Proposals or concept notes submitted after the internal deadline cannot be guaranteed successful review, approval and submission on time. Together with the final draft, responsible staff are required to also submit:

- a. A routing form (see Appendix) in addition to Proposal checklist (see PI Handbook for KNUST checklist for preparing proposals if a checklist is not given by the funder),
 - b. Guidelines/information related to call/proposal, if it is an invited proposal.
 - c. A budget narrative (if the proposal template does not include a budget narrative, one must be developed and submitted in consultation with OGR)
 - d. Description and approval of co-funding sources, if this is a requirement.
 - e. The OGR reviews the format, content, budget, and other issues with budget review assistance from the Finance Department. Budgets will be rated as:
 - i. Satisfactory i.e. - no further review needed
 - ii. Moderately satisfactory with minor revisions - no further review needed provided listed actions are taken
 - iii. Not satisfactory implying that major revisions are needed, as per the instructions, and re-submission for review is needed
7. The administrative procedures, including review and approval, take a minimum of 2 working days. Staff are therefore advised to take this into account when preparing proposals. In cases where PIs are travelling, they are advised to inform their other research team members of the on-going proposal development process and deadlines.
 8. The OGR will communicate the review to the proposal writing group within a maximum of four (4) working days, copies

of which will be given to the Provost of the College, Head of Department, Dean of Faculty/School or Director of Research Centre Staff. The group members will then be required to revise the proposal in line with the result of the review and send the revised version to OGR.

9. The proposal will be viewed as agreed to by the Provosts and Finance Departments. Once the proposal or concept note has been reviewed and accepted by the Provost of College, Head of Department, Dean of Faculty/School and Director of Research Centre, the OGR will send it to the Principal Investigator for the final approval, with copy to the Vice-Chancellor within two working days).
10. After the Vice-Chancellor's approval, the OGR or the Principal Investigator then submits the final copy to the prospective donor or to a partner who submits it to a prospective donor. Only proposals approved by the Vice-Chancellor will be submitted to the funder or partner.
11. Copies of proposals are submitted to the OGR for uploading in the project databases, Research Management Information System (ReMIS) and Grants Accounting Management Systems (GAMS). Under special circumstances (travel, extremely tight deadlines etc.), OGR may revise procedures as necessary and relevant.
12. In cases where a proposal has been approved, and the donor requires revisions to the proposal, Principal Investigators are to inform OGR. Where there are major revisions (change to OH) including budget changes of over 10%, change in scope, and changes in staffing), the proposal will have to undergo review and be re-approved. Staff must note that guidelines for project development in relation to full cost recovery are still valid, but exceptions can be made if approved by the Vice-Chancellor. Likewise, the Staff Effort and Compensation rates remain valid, but exceptions to use lower or actual staff costs can be made if approved by the Vice-Chancellor.
13. If a proposal is funded or not funded by a prospective donor/

funder, the PI is required to inform OGR, so that the status of the proposal (in ReMIS) is amended from submitted to “funded” or “not funded”.

3.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- The National Science Foundation (2003). Proposal award policies Procedures guide. Retried from [https:// www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/papp/nsf07140.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/papp/nsf07140.pdf) on 23-08-2018.
- USAID/OFDA (2018). Proposal Guidelines. Retried from [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID-OFDA Proposal Guidelines February 2018 O.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID-OFDA_Proposal_Guidelines_February_2018_O.pdf) on 30.08.2018.
- Whitaker, D. A. (1978) ‘Handbook of technical writing’, Proceedings of the IEEE, 66(5), pp. 612-613. doi: 10.1109/PROC.1978.10980.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- A **research proposal** is a document that proposes a research project. It describes the ideas for an investigation on a certain topic. It outlines the process from beginning to end and may be used to request financing for the project or certification for performing certain parts of the research.
- A **problem-based research proposal** is a proposal that is based on a well-articulated, research-worthy problem statement. A research problem attempts to justify the need for the research. Justifying the research question in the proposal does not only add meaning to the research but also serves as the first step in addressing the problem.
- A **concept note** refers to a brief summary of a proposal containing a brief description of the idea of the project and the objectives to be pursued. In many instances, funding agencies require a concept note before the submission of a full proposal, in order to decide whether the proposed project is in line with their priorities and to eliminate proposals that are not likely to be funded. Concept notes may also be submitted to funders who prefer to understand a project through a brief summary rather than a fully fledged proposal document.

5.0 APPENDICES

5.1 Appendix 1: Proposal Routing Form

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OFFICE OF GRANTS AND RESEARCH

PROPOSAL ROUTING FORM

The attached Proposal is submitted for routing.

Title of Proposal: _____

Funding Source: _____

Dollar/Cedi Amount Requested from Sponsor: _____

Department/Research Centre: _____

Submission Due Date: _____

Brief Description of Project:

Institutional Commitment (Cost Sharing): ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe.

A. Basic Proposal Information

Principal Investigator/Project Director: _____

Proposal includes KNUST Co-Investigator(s)? if yes, co-investigators must also sign/certify on the signature page. Yes ☐ No ☐

Period of performance (xx/xx/xxxx): _____ (start date) to : _____ (end date): _____

Sponsor deadline:

(m/d/yr): _____

If KNUST is the lead institution (list all external collaborating institutions below):

Lead applicant institution, if not KNUST, list the lead applicant institution first, followed by all other collaborating institutions:

B. Budget Summary (include all years)

Total direct cost _____ Total indirect cost: _____ Total budget: _____

Indirect cost rate: _____

Does the sponsor limit, or exclude indirect costs? Yes ☐ No ☐ If so, please enter the sponsor

Mandatory rate (%) where limitation is the case: _____

Does the budget include academic year course and /or release time for one or more project personnel? Yes ☐ No ☐

C. University and Third-Party Cost Sharing/Matching

The authorized departmental head must approve cost sharing/matching funds and provide OGR with a third party source of funding prior to submission.

Is cost-sharing/matching required by sponsor? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, specify sponsor match (% or ratio)

Is third party (external to KNUST) cost-sharing/matching included in this proposal? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, enter total amount below.

D. Proposal Compliance Review

This proposal involves (check all that applies):

Use of human subjects IRB protocol: _____ Review pending: _____
Approved: _____

Use of animal subjects protocol: _____ Review pending: _____
Approved: _____

Use of chemicals/ hazardous materials: ____ Specify: _____

Export controls (check all that apply)

Is there collaboration with a researcher or institution outside Ghana? Specify location of collaborator (s): _____

Travel outside Ghana? Specify location(s) of travel: _____

Proposal involves transmission of technical information, and/or shipment from a foreign country? Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes is checked, specify location of transmission/shipment

Intellectual property and proprietary/confidential information (check all that apply)

proposal involves KNUST or third-party Intellectual Property (IP)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, is this clearly stated in the proposal? Yes ☐ No ☐

E. Other Special Considerations

Proposal involves, requires or includes (check all that applies):

Use of Laboratory Yes ☐ No ☐

Additional Office space Yes ☐ No ☐

Equipment Rental/Use Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, Director, OGR and Department Head's approval (if applicable) are required prior to submission.

Multi-disciplinary research (across Departments/Faculties) Yes ☐ No ☐

Targeted community/region impact: specify localities that will directly benefit from the project activities: Yes ☐ No ☐

F. Additional Notes

You may use this space to provide any additional notes, explanation or other information you feel may be useful for your internal approvals (Department, Faculty, College and OGR)

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G. Investigators Certification

My signature below certifies that:

- The information submitted within the application is true, complete, and accurate to the best of my knowledge;
- I will accept (or share, with my co-investigators) responsibility for the financial and scientific conduct of the project and will provide the required financial and technical/progress reports if a grant is awarded;
- I am fully aware of the university's financial conflict of interest policy and if a significant financial interest exists now, or in the future in relation to this proposal, I will inform the OGR.

H. Signatures of Research Team Members

NAME	DEPARTMENT	ROLE ON THE PROJECT	SIGNATURE

I. Department/College/OGR Endorsement

OFFICIAL	NAME	SIGNATURE
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