

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi

# Guidelines and Procedures for **Concept Note and Proposal Development**



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



KWAME NKUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE  
AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI-GHANA  
**QUALITY ASSURANCE AND  
PLANNING UNIT**

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# FOREWORD

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi has a mission to advance knowledge in science and technology through creating an environment for undertaking relevant research, quality teaching, entrepreneurship training and community engagement to improve the quality of life. In order to achieve this mission, there is the need to have Conflict of Interest in Research Policy.

The rationale of this policy is to develop and maintain a system of effective health service delivery, ensure safety and welfare for staff and students.

The University is grateful to all those who ensured the initiation, development and approval of this Policy.

**PROFESSOR K. OBIRI-DANSO**

VICE-CHANCELLOR



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As part of the strategic planning mandate of the Quality Assurance and Planning Unit (QAPU), University policies are initiated and proposed for approval by the Academic Board. The Unit in collaboration with the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) therefore initiated the preparation of the Conflict of Interest in Research Policy and submitted for approval by the Academic Board.

The QAPU is grateful to Prof. R. C. Abaidoo (Director), Dr. Owusu Amponsah (Department of Planning), Mrs. Amanda Owusu-Asare (Assistant Registrar) and the entire staff of OGR for their invaluable contributions to this policy. A special thanks goes to the Building Stronger Universities Project (BSU111) for providing financial and technical support for developing grants related policies in the University including the Conflict of Interest in Research.

Lastly, we wish to appreciate the work of the Review Committee and all staff of the University who contributed in several ways to the development and approval of this Policy.

**PROF. CHRISTIAN AGYARE**

HEAD, QAPU

JUNE, 2019

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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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## 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

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY 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)

--

## 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
DEPARTMENT/RESEARCH CENTER		
FACULTY/SCHOOL		
COLLEGE		
OFFICE OF GRANTS AND RESEARCH		

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