



Office of
Grants & Research

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

KNUST RESEARCH FUND (KREF)

GENERAL CONDITIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE

9TH CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

JANUARY, 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

The KNUST Research Fund (KReF) provides an internal source of funding support for cutting-edge research that addresses specific societal problems. The aim is to encourage faculty members to be more innovative in identifying and conceptualising research projects with readily implementable outputs for uptake. The Fund is also intended to build staff capacity in sourcing and managing research grants from external funding agencies.

KReF is administered by the Office of Grants and Research (OGR) on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). It is the responsibility of OGR to provide strategic direction for the effective administration, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of KReF in line with the University's research policy. The OGR is responsible for the application, review, and award processes of KReF.

The conditions described in this document are intended to inform and guide Principal Investigators and all stakeholders about the requirements of KReF concerning the project implementation, fund disbursement and management, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of outputs and outcomes.

Any inquiries regarding the administration of KReF may be directed to OGR at ogr@knust.edu.gh or +233 0322062184/5.

2. AWARD TYPES

Two types of awards will be made under this call. These are:

- a. **Seed Grants:** These awards will be for relatively small pilot or exploratory research projects that focus on exploring the feasibility of emerging research approaches. Seed grants allow investigators to collect preliminary data for future scale-up activities or to inform significant grant applications. Seed awards shall not exceed a total of **Twenty Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢ 20,000)** per Award.
- b. **Multi/Interdisciplinary Grants:** These awards are for research projects that seek to address developmental issues in society through multi/inter/transdisciplinary approaches that can shape or influence policy and practice. This award category is also intended to promote research collaborations among various Departments and Colleges of the University and relevant external stakeholders. The research team should comprise members from at least three distinct disciplines or fields of study. Funding for such proposals shall be **up to Fifty-Five Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢ 55,000)** per Award.

3. ELIGIBILITY

The eligibility criteria for KReF are as follows:

- All Senior Members (academic and administrative) of KNUST
- Early to mid-career researchers and female applicants are particularly encouraged to apply
- Eligible applicants can submit only **ONE** application as the Lead/Principal Investigator
- The following are **NOT** eligible to apply as Principal Investigators:
 - Staff on post-retirement contract, sabbatical leave, study leave, or part-time contract. They are, however, allowed to be part of a team of eligible applicants as co-investigators or team members
 - Persons who have received KReF awards within the past three years
 - Persons who have previously received two KReF awards
 - Previous grantees who have not fulfilled all the conditions of their award, including the submission of progress reports, completion reports and publications
 - Undergraduate or postgraduate students. However, postgraduate students can be part of a team of eligible applicants for capacity-building purposes

4. AWARD DURATION

The KNUST Research Fund award is granted for a period not exceeding 12 months. A Principal Investigator may request for a No-Cost-Extension (NCE) of up to six (6) months to enable them to complete all project activities. An NCE application shall be submitted to the Director of OGR no later than three months before the original end date of the project. The NCE application may be granted after an evaluation by OGR and shall be at no additional cost to KReF. A further extension of this period may not be granted.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

All applications submitted to KReF shall undergo a three-stage assessment process that ensures that the most competitive applications are selected for awards. The three-stage assessment processes are as follows:

➤ **Stage1: Screening and Quality Checks**

This process involves an initial assessment of all applications by OGR staff to ensure that the applicant fulfils all application requirements. At this stage, emphasis is placed on whether or not an applicant has followed all administrative requirements, including formatting, the inclusion of CVs for all named partners in the application, and other supporting documents. Applications that fail this initial process shall not progress to the review stage.

➤ **Stage 2: Peer-Review of Proposals**

The peer-review stage involves the review of applications by researchers with expertise in the scientific field of the research proposal presented in a particular application. Each application is extensively reviewed by at least two reviewers appointed by the KReF Scientific Review Committee. Reviewers strictly adhere to the KReF Review Criteria (see section 8) to ensure fairness, integrity, and professionalism in the assessment process. Applications that obtain higher reviewer scores and get recommended for funding by both reviewers shall progress to the final assessment stage.

➤ **Stage 3: Final Evaluation and Selection of Awardees**

The final stage of the KReF assessment process entails the evaluation of reviewers' reports and the selection of successful applicants by the KReF Scientific Review Committee. Based on the reviewer reports, the total approved budget for the cycle and other relevant considerations, the Committee recommends the list of successful applicants for approval by the OGR Advisory Board.

6. REVIEW CRITERIA

The KReF review process consists of three primary criteria, namely:






- A. Relevance:** this measures the extent to which the research proposal sufficiently addresses issues of national concern and the overall mandate of KNUST. The Relevance Criterion carries 20% of the total score and focuses on the following areas:
 - i. Relevance of the theme and its degree of priority to national development and the University's mandate;
 - ii. Link and added value to ongoing research or efforts in the thematic area;
 - iii. Likelihood of uptake and impact of the proposed project on improving policy or practice.
- B. Effectiveness:** this evaluates the ability of the proposed activities to contribute to the expected outputs and outcomes about budget, project scope, methodology, the credibility of the research team as well as relevant collaborations. The Effectiveness Criterion carries 30% of the total score and focuses on the following areas:
 - i. Quality of budget and other co-funding considerations;
 - ii. Level of coherence between project objectives, outputs, and outcomes
 - iii. Strength of the research team and the involvement of relevant disciplines within and outside the University.
- C. Proposal Quality:** this measures the overall quality of the proposal concerning innovation, clear problem definition, structure, organisation of the proposal,

the feasibility of project implementation activities, including dissemination strategies. The Proposal Quality Criterion carries 50% of the total score and focuses on the following areas:

- i. Clarity of problem definition, objectives, and embedding of the project into national development;
- ii. Originality and level of innovation;
- iii. Clarity and scientific robustness of the methodology;
- iv. Research dissemination and uptake mechanisms;
- v. Feasibility of project activities and timelines;
- vi. General organisation of the proposal.

7. ALLOWABLE COST

As a capacity-building grant for KNUST researchers, the KReF award is intended to provide direct funding support for research activities and not necessarily for time inputs or salaries of staff on the project or stipend for students. The following costs are allowable under KReF:

-  Research Materials and Supplies - include laboratory supplies, books, data samples and other research consumables
-  Travel and Fieldwork- include the cost of fuel, field accommodation, hiring of vehicles, and allowance for field assistants or enumerators.
-  Small Tools and Equipment – include the cost of research tools such as field data recorders, field cameras, laboratory equipment, data storage
-  Meetings and Workshops Cost – the cost of meals, stationery, venue, facilitation and other related costs
-  Communication and Dissemination - journal publications, media coverage, community meetings, and other dissemination activities.

8. NON-ALLOWABLE COST

The under-listed cost items are **NOT** allowable and cannot be charged to the KReF grant:



- a) **Indirect cost or overhead** – KReF grants are internally generated funds and do not attract overhead costs to the University or the host Department.
- b) **Personnel cost or emoluments** – KReF is for staff capacity development and cannot be used to pay for staff inputs or efforts on the project.
- c) **Payment of honorarium or sitting allowance to project participants**
- d) **Personal equipment-** including laptops, desktop computers, printers, scanners, etc
- e) All other costs have not been budgeted and approved for in the Award.

9. AWARD PROCESS

The Office of Grants and Research (OGR), upon receipt of the final list of selected awardees from the KReF Scientific Review Committee, shall notify the Vice-Chancellor of the outcome of the assessment process. Subsequently, all applicants are informed about the status of their application regardless of the outcomes. Reviewers' comments will be shared with all applicants to help them improve their research projects for future applications.

10. FUND DISBURSEMENT







The PI shall be the project's grant holder and approved spending officer. The disbursement of the funds shall be in three instalments as follows:

-  50% upon submission of the signed KReF Agreement and a Project Implementation Plan
-  40% upon submission and approval of the mid-term (progress) report
- 10% upon evidence of submission of a manuscript to a high-impact journal indexed in Web of Science or Scopus

To access funds, the PI shall make an official request to the Director of OGR.

11. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

In implementing the approved research project, Principal Investigators are required to;

-  Use the reviewer comments provided to improve the approved research project;
-  Obtain relevant ethical approval for the research;
-  Involve all team members and external partners indicated in the proposal;
-  Submit the Project Implementation Plan to OGR (see Appendix I) and use it as a guide throughout the award period;
-  Continuously monitor and ensure strict compliance with the project goals and objectives and the the KREF framework; and
-  Complete the project within the stated duration on the award letter.



12. MONITORING AND REPORTING

To achieve the objectives of KReF, all awardees shall be required to comply with the following:

- i. submit an Implementation Plan (see Appendix I) for the approved research project within two weeks upon receipt of the Award
- ii. submit a Progress Report (see Appendix II) in the 7th month of the award period

- iii. submit at least one draft Manuscript to OGR by the 11th month of the award period
- iv. submit a detailed Completion Report (see Appendix III) highlighting any additional outputs or deliverables from the Award
- v. submit a financial report and render accounts on all funds received
- vi. Provide evidence of submission of **at least one paper** to a high-impact journal indexed in Web of Science or Scopus with KReF duly acknowledged
- vii. Other expected outputs include;
 - Scaled up research projects
 - Policy briefs
 - Postgraduate thesis
 - Business set up
 - Inventions
 - Patents
 - Other external grants proposal/ award
 - Stakeholder dissemination meetings

13. NON-COMPLIANCE AND TERMINATION OF GRANT

-  It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) to inform OGR immediately about any unforeseen circumstances that may have a significant impact on the approved project, including any changes in the project team members or external partners.
-  Non-compliance is deemed to occur if the PI fails to fulfil all the conditions outlined in the KReF framework as defined in this document. These include;
 - Failure to submit appropriate progress and financial reports
 - Spending project funds on unapproved activities, non-allowable items, or outside the approved budget
 - Lack of progress towards the planned objectives for a period exceeding 6-9 months
 - Submission of the approved research project to another funding agency without the approval of KREF.

In the event of non-compliance, KNUST is entitled to take appropriate action against the PI to limit the consequences of the violation. A written reprimand shall be issued to the PI requesting that the breach be remedied within a grace period.

If the Principal Investigator fails to remedy the non-compliance within the grace period, KNUST holds the right to discontinue funding, revoke the Award, and claim repayment of already disbursed funds. This may be followed by an investigation, financial audit, suspension of further disbursement, reimbursement of funds, and award termination. In the event of financial loss or termination of the Award, the

PI shall be surcharged, and the Finance Officer is authorised to recoup any debts from the PI's monthly salary and other accrued entitlements.

Before a possible termination, all parties will seek to resolve conflicts through negotiation. Unresolved conflicts cannot be brought before a court but must be resolved through arbitration. This process shall be guided by appropriate policies and procedures in the University.

14. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

The KNUST Intellectual Property Policy shall guide the right to all outputs from the KReF research projects. Principal Investigators must ensure that KReF is duly acknowledged in all publications emanating from their KReF research project.

15. APPENDICES

Appendix I: KREF Implementation Plan Template

Appendix II: KREF Progress Report Template

Appendix III: KReF Completion Report Template