

Research Funding Policy of the Open University of Sri Lanka

1. Policy Name:

Research Funding Policy of the Open University of Sri Lanka

2. Effective date: 31.07.2020

3. Introduction

3.1. Background & Context

University research is defined as any research activity undertaken by a staff member or student of The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) for the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies and understanding.

Where possible, the University has taken efforts to encourage research activities by providing facilities and funds for the purpose of conducting or supporting research (such funds provided by the University is hereinafter referred as research funds). OUSL research funds are mandated to support research, both Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and discipline-based studies.

3.2. Need

The OUSL as made available research funds annually to staff, and budgetary allocations for research have been significantly increased in the recent past, providing funds not only to staff but also for students. Therefore, the University felt the need to prepare a policy for the transparent disbursements and monitoring of research funds.

3.3. Purpose

To establish an overarching policy on funding for research, in accordance with the University strategy of supporting research activities of OUSL staff and students, and to ensure research funds are managed according to relevant financial regulations and procedures of the University.

3.4. Rationale

To encourage research activities of staff and students in producing an evidence base in a multitude of academic disciplines.

4. Policy Principles

General policy principles governing OUSL research are as follows:

- University research must be conducted for purposes that are consistent with the University's mission for preservation, pursuit, dissemination, and application of knowledge.
- The University encourages the publication of research output and is considered to include, but is not limited to, journal publications, proceedings of conferences, student dissertations and theses, and book chapters and books.

5. Policy Statements:

The OUSL aims to:

- 5.1.** Encourage and support both Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Discipline based research.
- 5.2.** Actively support researchers who seek funding to encourage research activities at the OUSL.
- 5.3.** Annually allocate adequate funds for research in the University budget
- 5.4.** Be financially accountable and transparent in the way in which it allocates, manages, monitors and reports its research fund allocations and outcomes.

6. Policy Goals

The goal of this policy is to support research activities of staff and students whilst ensuring the efficient and effective management of research funds.

7. Applicability & Scope

This policy covers all categories of research funding awarded by the OUSL and applies to all those applying for or disbursing research funding, including:

- 7.1.** OUSL staff who apply for or has been awarded research funding
- 7.2.** OUSL staff involved in the administration of research funds awarded by the University
- 7.3.** Postgraduate or undergraduate research students of OUSL who apply for or has been awarded research funding
- 7.4.** External collaborators/coinvestigators of research projects funded by OUSL

This policy does not cover research funding awarded by external entities.

8. Policy Implementation:

This Research Funding Policy shall become effective from the date approved by the Council.

8.1.Strategies

This policy will be given University-wide publicity via electronic and print media (webpage of the Research unit, distribution of e-mails to and/or brochures, etc) for its implementation.

8.2.Responsibility & Authority

Individual Grantees (including students, staff, and external collaborators/coinvestigators), administrators involved in disbursing research funds (including Heads, Deans, other Divisional/Centre Heads & Directors, Director, Research, Bursar and Vice-Chancellor) shall be responsible for carrying out the policy statements.

8.3.Monitoring & Evaluation

Effectiveness of the Research Funding Policy must be monitored and evaluated by Director/Research after a period of 5 years and use such findings to make amendments to the policy, where necessary.

9. List of Relevant Guidelines:

- A. Guidelines for Faculty Research Grants Scheme
- B. Guidelines for Innovation Grants Scheme
- C. Guidelines for Competitive Research Grants Scheme
- D. Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Grant Schemes
 - i. Split-site Postgraduate Scholarships
 - ii. Postgraduate Research Supplement (Overseas)
 - iii. Postgraduate Research Supplement (Local)
- E. Guidelines for International Travel Grants Scheme for OUSL staff - For presenting research papers in international conferences
- F. Guidelines for financial assistance for local conferences/research seminars
- G. Guidelines for financial assistance for OUSL undergraduate-research projects

Minimum total budget allocation per year for different grant schemes

Grant Category	Minimum Total Budget Allocation per year (LKR)	Further Details of Budget Allocation
A. Faculty Research Grants Scheme	10,000,000.00	For all Six (06) Faculties
B. Innovation Grants Scheme	600,000.00	Maximum six (06) Applicants
C. Competitive Research Grants Scheme	4,000,000.00	Maximum four (04) Applicants
D. Postgraduate Research Grant Schemes		
i. Split-site Postgraduate Scholarship	10,000,000.00	Maximum five (05) Applicants
ii. Postgraduate Research Supplement (Overseas)	10,000,000.00	Maximum ten (10) Applicants
iii. Postgraduate Research Supplement (Local)	10,000,000.00	Maximum ten (10) Applicants
E. International Travel Grants Scheme for OUSL staff for research purposes	1,800,000.00	
F. Financial assistance for local conferences/research seminars for OUSL staff	1,600,000.00	Maximum fifty (50) Applicants
G. Financial assistance for OUSL undergraduate-research projects	2,000,000.00	Maximum forty (40) Applicants
Total	48,000,000.00	

A. Guidelines for Faculty Research Grants

Faculty Research Grants are provided to assist in funding research projects of staff members of OUSL, particularly aimed at encouraging staff to secure funding through competitive research grants locally and internationally.

The Faculties shall adhere to the following guidelines when disbursing such research funds. Faculties may also draw up further regulations and procedures as necessary within the broad guidelines outlined below.

- a) Funds will be available for staff of the OUSL annually for ODL or discipline-based research projects, which are administered at the Faculty-level.
- b) The proposed research projects should be original investigations. The problem to be tackled or new knowledge to be generated should be clearly identified. Only well formulated research proposals should be considered.
- c) The maximum amount of a grant shall not exceed **LKR 1.0 million** per project.
- d) Funding will be provided only for one year at a time.
- e) Faculty Research Grants shall not be used for research work associated with postgraduate studies undertaken by the permanent staff members.
- f) Requests for Faculty Research Grants should only be considered if the particular research project is not already receiving funds from the OUSL through other similar research grant scheme (for e.g.: competitive research grant scheme).
- g) Preference should be given to early career researchers and those projects that are not already receiving funds from external funding sources.
- h) **Application for Grants**
 - Faculty Research Committee should call for applications to be submitted by 30th September of each year.
 - Applications for Faculty Research Grants must be made on the prescribed Research Grant Application Form obtainable from the Dean's Office or Research unit webpage.
 - Principal Investigator (PI) of a project requesting funds should be a permanent academic staff member of OUSL.
 - Principal Investigator should be a Senior researcher with postgraduate research qualifications / publications in the relevant area who has the capacity and knowledge to lead and make a significant contribution to the project.

- There can be other researchers as Co-investigators (internal or external) who make a significant contribution to the project and assuming responsibility for all aspects of the project. Persons without a postgraduate research degree should apply as a co-investigator together with a senior researcher from the Department, with a postgraduate research degree in the relevant field, as the PI.
- Typically, grants can be provided for minor equipment, supplies, travel, personnel and services needed for a research project.
- No funds should be provided to the researchers for conducting the research, including for data analysis, report writing etc. No payments should also be made for university employees for work conducted during working hours or on overtime payments.
- The budget should be prepared in line with the university approved rates of payments for various items.

i) **Evaluation and Award:**

Grant applications will normally be considered once a year. Those that meet the application criteria will be subjected to a peer review process by the experts nominated by the faculty research committee. The decision of the Faculty Research Committee will be final and no correspondence on the subject will be entertained after the awards are made. Grantees are expected to commence the research work soon after announcement of the award.

- Funding should be decided on the merits of the proposals and in competition through peer- review process by the experts (minimum 1) nominated by the Faculty Research Committee.
- Based on the evaluation of reviewer/s, applications should be approved by the Faculty Research Committee and recommended through the appropriate channel (Dean, Director Research) for approval of the Finance Committee by January of each year.
- Grantees are expected to commence the research work soon after announcement of the award.
- The PI is fully responsible for disbursement of the funds and for settling all bills according to the requirements of the Finance Division.
- The Department should take action to inventorise the purchased items.
- After completion of the project, purchases made from the grant must remain at the University as property of the relevant Department. Any intellectual property rights arising out of the research shall be in accordance with the relevant OUSL policies.

- The PI should submit a final report and make a presentation to the Faculty and meet any other requirements (not listed above) as specified by the Faculty Research Committee/Dean.
- The financial support received from the OUSL should be acknowledged in communications that arise out of the research.

B. Guidelines for Innovation Grants Scheme

OUSL Innovation Grants program is being initiated to support innovations, explorations, and other scientific developments by way of designs, products and methods etc. in order to raise awareness and encourage engagement in innovative efforts by the members of the academic staff and the students of the OUSL. Grant recipients receive a maximum **LKR 100,000/=** as financial support for such work.

- Innovation Grants are open to members of the academic staff and current students of the Open University of Sri Lanka.
- The applicant/s may obtain matching grants in cash or other contributions (e.g. resources from collaborators) in order to complete the innovation project with the prior approval of the OUSL.
- In providing funds, the specified project goals, the feasibility of the project, and the optimum utilization of the outcome of the innovation and long-term sustainability may become important factors.
- If the applicant is a current student and wish to apply for a grant, he/she needs to have a faculty mentor who is aware of the applicant's plans to use the funds and is willing to advise the applicants through the proposed project.
- It is required to complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) as a preliminary exercise and submit to the Director/Research.
- In case of members of the academic staff, it is required to submit their EOIs as per the format given below. Item Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 9 are relevant to students only. The EOI should include the following information in brief.

1. Project Title:
2. Name of the Applicant: (Students must provide Registration Number)
3. Contact Telephone / e mail:
4. Department / Faculty:
5. Course of Study: (for students only)
6. Year of Study: (for students only)
7. Name of Faculty Advisor: (for students only)
8. Project Description in Brief:
 - Short project title:
 - Goal / objectives of your project:

- What problems does your project address?
- What solutions does your project offer?
- What is the innovation?
- How is this solution different to what is currently available on the market?
- What is the potential market for your proposal?
- Total project cost:

9. Consent of the Faculty Advisor: (for students only)

10. Signature and date

C. Guidelines for Competitive Research Grants Scheme

The purpose of this grant scheme is to promote high quality multidisciplinary research in diverse fields in order to develop the capacity of the academics and also to help the policy makers in Sri Lanka to utilize the knowledge generated through research for national development.

- Grants are open to any member of the academic staff of the OUSL.
- All applicants should have at least a Master's degree with a thesis based on research from a recognized university.
- Grant application should be made by the Principal Investigator on prescribed forms available from the OUSL.
- Grants are awarded for a period of one year up to a maximum of three years.
- The Principal Investigator should have postgraduate qualifications with proven research track record and the Co-Investigators must have research experience in the relevant field.
- Researchers who have already obtained research grants under this scheme and continuing their research projects are not entitled to apply for these grants until their research projects are successfully completed.
- Funding Specifications

Funding will be considered for:

Equipment and minor equipment

Consumables

Travel within the country

Allowance for research assistants (as and when necessary)

Funds will not be available for salaries/emoluments of investigators / collaborators.

- Funding will be approved for one year at a time, but the program is designed to fund projects over multiple years not exceeding three years.
- Extension of grants for subsequent years will depend on rigorous evaluation of the work already done in the previous year.
- A progress report must be submitted at the end of first six months of the Project in order to consider the granting of further funding to continue the project.
- The Grants will typically fall within the range of **LKR 500,000/- to 1,000,000/-** a year.

- The research grant provides sufficient funds to purchase essential equipment so that it will contribute significantly to institutional infrastructure development. It is expected that equipment already available in the collaborating departments / institutions are also used for the project.
- If postgraduate students are requested, the Principal Investigators/Co Investigators are required to register postgraduate students for PhD/M.Phil. degree in the relevant faculty of the university.
- All Principal Investigators are required to obtain the approval of the proposed PhD/M.Phil. project by the Research and Higher Degree Committee and, where appropriate, the approval of the Ethics Committee of the OUSL. The Principal Investigator is solely responsible for the postgraduate student's activities.
- The responsibility of successful implementation of the project will lie solely with the Principal Investigator.
- The Principal Investigator will undertake to execute the project funded by the OUSL for the duration of the grant in the department/faculty to which the Principal Investigator belongs and where the work will be mainly carried out.

D. Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Grant Schemes

i. Split-site Postgraduate Scholarships

This scholarship is awarded to an OUSL academic staff member to register for a full-time postgraduate degree leading to a PhD on split-site basis **only**. In areas of study where an MPhil is a requirement for entry to PhD programme, this scholarship may be utilized initially for MPhil and thereafter for PhD. However, the maximum duration/period of the scholarship shall not exceed **three** years.

The split-site scholarship will support postgraduate study at an overseas university, with a part of the study being undertaken in Sri Lanka for a minimum period of 12 months, not necessarily continuous, under the joint supervision of academics and scientists from both institutions. Registration for the postgraduate degree and the final qualification (PhD) obtained can be from either a Sri Lankan University/OUSL or a University abroad.

- Split-site scholarships are awarded to Lecturers (Probationary) of OUSL, who are entitled to full-time study leave, for at least four years of the total probationary period and Senior Lecturers who do not possess a PhD and have the total duration of the study comprising the balance of their study leave and/or the sabbatical leave. They shall also be able to serve the OUSL at least five years after receiving PhD.
- The maximum value of each scholarship will be **LKR 6.0 million**. Scholarship funds will be granted up to 3 years, disbursing 6.0 million over a period of three years.
- The total value of the scholarship shall be decided by the Selection Committee and may vary depending on the field of research study undertaken, tuition fees and other considerations. The university will inform each candidate of the maximum grant approved.
- Each scholarship will cover approved registration, tuition and examination fees, and a personal living allowance (when overseas) at a rate approved by the OUSL, subject to the maximum value of the scholarship awarded.
- OUSL will invite nominations each year from eligible members of staff. The number of scholarships to be granted each year shall be decided by the Senior Management Committee.
- Each Head of Department, in consultation with the respective Dean of the Faculty shall nominate one staff member who satisfies the eligibility criteria. In case there is more than one nominee from a Department, a priority list shall be given. The nominee(s) shall submit a duly completed application form together with a proposal and a tentative placement.

Each Faculty shall select the nominees to be recommended to the Vice-Chancellor. The selection at Faculty level shall be done by a committee comprising the Dean of the Faculty and Heads of Departments, based on the Selection Criteria (Table 1) given below. Completion of CTHE for Lecturer (Probationary) or Induction Program for Senior Lecturers is an essential requirement for selection

ii. Postgraduate Research Supplement (Overseas)

This scholarship is awarded to an OUSL academic staff member who has already obtained a scholarship or through self-funding arrangement to follow a postgraduate programme at an overseas University. The fund is given as a supplement to the existing funding. The academic who is applying for this grant should prove that the funds already received is insufficient to support his or her studies in the overseas institute. The funding may be given to cover approved registration, tuition and examination fees, or as Accommodation allowance. In case of fees to be paid, funds will be directly sent to the University concerned and in case of Accommodation allowance the recipient is required to submit the receipts of payments for accommodation to the university. The maximum value of each scholarship will be LKR 1.0 million per annum per staff member. Scholarship funds will be granted up to a maximum of 3 years.

iii. Postgraduate Research Supplement (Local)

This scholarship is awarded to an OUSL staff member who has already registered for a research degree locally and requires funds to carry out his research work. The funding may be given to cover cost involved in carrying out research including, cost of materials, testing fees, and travel grant to an overseas institute to carry out experiments. All payments must follow the financial guidelines of the University. The maximum value of each scholarship will be LKR 1.0 million per annum per staff member. Scholarship funds will be granted up to a maximum of 3 years.

E. Guidelines for International Travel Grant Scheme for OUSL staff - For presenting Research Papers in International Conferences

Eligibility: All permanent Academic Staff Members, Administrative & Finance officers (U-Ex 2 above), and Technical Officers (Grade 1 and above)

Criteria of Eligibility for funding: Following criteria will be followed in making the decision for eligibility for funding.

- a) The applicant for the grant shall be a co-author or the sole author of the paper and should have substantially contributed to the research and development of the research paper (a letter from other co-authors shall be submitted to this effect)
- b) The subject area of the paper must belong to the area of specialization discipline of the author.
- c) Papers shall be presented only in conference where the papers are reviewed, edited and are compiled into a conference Proceeding (hard copy or electronic) document.
- d) Extended abstracts that are not published in a conference proceedings document shall not qualify for funding (it shall be the responsibility of the applicant to prove that the conference papers are reviewed and published in proceedings).
- e) The paper presented shall be an original unpublished paper which has not been presented or which has not proposed to be presented in any other conferences, including the Annual Academic Sessions of the OUSL

Procedure to be Followed:

The applicant, along with the application for funding shall submit the accepted full paper which is being planned to be at the conference through proper channels to the Vice Chancellor.

The Research Division of the University will be responsible for the evaluation of the paper by an internal subject expert to ascertain the quality of the papers to be published in an international forum. It is proposed that the Research Division submit its recommendations with in two-weeks of submission of the application.

Amount of funding:

- a) Funding will be provided only for registration (Early Bird registration is encouraged), an economy class air ticket via the cheapest possible route and the visa fee
- b) It shall be the responsibility of the applicant to finance the accommodation and other incidental express during the stay of the conference, including any travel/medical insurance.

- c) For those applicants who are not eligible for the Research allowance with their salary, a nominal incidental allowance of **US\$40/-** per day shall be provided for the duration of the conference only.
- d) An applicant may be granted an amount not exceeding **LKR150,000/-** year to **LKR300,000/-** once in two years.
- e) However, an applicant may be granted an amount not exceeding **LKR 300,000/-** once a year if the candidate has published research paper in a journal indexed in one of the following in the current or previous year.

Web of science, SCOPUS, Russian Science Citation Index, Chinese Science Citation Database, Korea Citation Index, JSTOR, ACADEMIC SEARCH COMPLETE, ANNUAL REVIEWS, PROQUEST, SAGE JOURNALS, SOCIAL EXPLORER, SOCIAL SCIENCE CITATION INDEX, SPRINGER LINK

Frequency and conditions for funding:

- a) Funding will be made available for each staff member either once a calendar year or once in two calendar years.
- b) Applicants who are applying for the second and subsequent time for funding shall be meet the following requirements
 - i. Applicant should have published a full research paper in a referred journal during the year in which the funding is requested.
 - ii. Paper thus published may be an upgraded version of the paper presented in the previous conference or an entirely new paper.
 - iii. Applicant shall be a co-author of the paper and should have substantially contribute to the research and development of the research paper thus published in the referred journal (letterers from other co-authors shall be submitted to this effect).
 - iv. The other co-authors of the paper published cannot use the same paper for their application of funds.
 - v. A report previous visit should have been submitted to the SAR/Establishment.
 - vi. Teachers who obtained funds for presenting papers in the AAOU conference shall be also be required to comply with the above conditions (i to v) when applying for funding in future.
 - vii. Teachers applying for funds shall show evidence of course development at the time of application.(The following guidelines may be used for this purpose: Number of lessons developed/revised/edited during the service period of the academic; Any online/video/audio/interactive multimedia material developed by

the teacher would qualify as lesson material developed. The course material thus developed must have been given to the students.)

- viii. Administrative officers applying for funds to present papers overseas should have at least presented/published one full paper or two abstracts in local conferences/journals.
- ix. Technical officers applying for funds to present papers overseas should have obtained a minimum of 25 marks from sections (i),(ii),(iii) and (iv) in the marking scheme for candidates for promotion to the post of Senior Staff Officer circular 922) and have at least presented /published one full paper or two abstracts in local conferences/journals.
- x. A staff member who had applied for funding under this scheme will not be eligible to apply for funding under the “Bond Violation Fund” allocation in the same year for publishing or presenting papers.
- xi. In cases where the funding has already been disbursed by the University (conference fee, air ticket and visa fee) and after which if the staff member fails to attend the conference, other than due to very special reasons (serious illness or a death in the family), if the university is not in a position to obtain a refund from the conference organizers/travel agent, the staff member is liable to reimburse the expenses incurred by the University, including the visa fee.

**F. Guidelines for Financial assistance for local conferences/research
Seminars for OUSL staff**

- A. Funds can be granted up to a maximum of **LKR 30, 000/-** per year only for participation in a Seminar/Conference held locally. A person can be granted funds any number of times subject to this ceiling.
- B. Funds can be granted up to a maximum of **LKR 60, 000/-** per year to present a paper in a Conference/ Seminar held locally. A person can be granted funds any number of times subject to this ceiling.
- C. The Conference/ Seminar should be relevant to the area of specification of staff member.
- D. If the staff member expects the payments made in advance to be reimbursed, he/she should be obtained the prior approval for the registration from the Leave and Awards committee.

G. Guidelines for Financial Assistance for OUSL Undergraduate- Research Projects

Grants will be provided to assist in funding research projects of undergraduate students of the OUSL. The Faculties shall adhere to the following guidelines when disbursing such research funds.

Faculties may also draw up further regulations and procedures as necessary within the broad guidelines outlined below.

- a. Funds will be provided for research being undertaken by a student or group of students registered for a 'Research Project' course of an undergraduate degree programme offered by the OUSL.
- b. The maximum amount of a grant shall be **LKR 50,000/-** per project.
- c. Applications for undergraduate research grants should be submitted by a Supervisor who is a permanent academic staff member of OUSL or a Head of a Department on behalf of the student/s, in the event the Supervisor is external.
- d. Requests for research support will only be considered if the particular research project is not already receiving the required funds from the OUSL or other external funding source.
- e. Applications should be approved by the Faculty Research Committee and recommended through the appropriate channels for approval of the Finance Committee.
- f. Typically, grants can be provided for supplies and services needed for a research project that are not available to the student/s at the OUSL. Grants may not be used for subsistence and assistants/personnel.
- g. The Department shall take actions to inventorize the purchased items, where relevant.
- h. After completion of the project, purchases made from the grant must remain at the University as property of the relevant Department. Any intellectual property rights arising out of the research shall be in accordance with the relevant OUSL policies.
- i. The recipient of the grant (Supervisor or Head of Department) is fully responsible for disbursement of the funds and also for settling all bills according to the requirements of the Finance Division.
- j. The recipient shall submit a statement indicating completion of project and meet any other requirements (not listed above) specified by the Faculty Research Committee.
- k. The financial support received from the OUSL should be acknowledged in communications that arise out of the research.