



The Research Grants Policy at the Arab Open University

Adopted by AOU University Council

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Article (1) Title

The current bylaws shall bear the title of: “The Research Grants Policy at the Arab Open University”

Article (2): Definitions

- a) The following words and expressions shall have the meanings specified hereunder unless the context indicates otherwise:

University	The Arab Open University (AOU)
Branch	The AOU branch in a certain country
Rector	The Branch Rector

Article (3): Nomenclature

Arab Open University	AOU, University
Arab Open University Branch	Branch
Research Development Committees at a Branch	BRDC
Central Committee for Research Development	CRSR
Central Research Centre	CRO
Dean of a Faculty at AOU	Dean
The Headquarters of the Arab Open University	HQ
Supervisor of Research Funding	RFA

Article (4): Grants (in the order they are cited)

Applied Research Grants	ARG
Small Research Grants	SG
Local Community & Industry Cooperation Fund	CICF
Junior and New Staff Grants	ECNSG
Institutional Research Grants	IRG
Research Excellence Award	REA
Seminar and Conference Grants	SCG

Article (5): Research Grants Policy at the Arab Open University

RGP Aims:

The aim of the Research Grants Policy (RGP) is to draw up the administrative system which governs the process of financing research projects at the Arab Open University. This system applies to all research activities of AOU staff – as individuals or teams or in collaboration with other parties outside the university, as well as students' research activities – which require internal or external resources.

A. The Basic Types of Research Financing and their Aims

1. Aims of Financing Research Works:

- Contributing to knowledge through conducting high-quality research projects which are in line with the Arab Open University's message and its strategies.
- Increasing cooperation with the local community, the government, the industrial sector, and all higher education & research establishments in order to determine social and economic problems and find solutions to them.
- Augmenting AOU staff's knowledge in a manner that boosts students' expertise and capabilities.
- Attracting and employing distinguished staff members.

2. The Principal Means of Financing Research Projects

AOU researchers may benefit from two major sources of research financing:

- **Internal Research grants** which are allotted from the AOU's budget commensurate with income, and
- **External financing** which could come in the form of a research grant, a contract to do research, or a research donation.
- **Research subsidy** that includes financing self-research on the principle of competition. This requires presenting periodic reports and it might probably place certain restrictions on the use of allotted funds. It would not, however, have any legal ramifications during implementation.
- **Research contract/agreement:** Financing is provided via a binding legal agreement/contract which outlines the research conditions and direction in addition to a timeline, a financial system, the right to administer the results of the project, etc.
- **Research Allowance:** This is usually presented for a specific purpose but it would not include presenting periodic reports and it would not have a specific time limit. Moreover, there would not be any restrictions on how the financing is administered.

B. Management of Research Finance

There are three bodies responsible for the management of research projects. These are:

- The Central Research Bureau

- Research Development Committees at each AOU branch
- The Central Committee for Academic Research

The following sums up the tasks allocated to each of the above sides concerning the administration of internal and external research subsidies. Other jobs and tasks have been delineated in the document titled “**Academic Research Policy at the Arab Open University**”. Meanwhile, details of relevant principles and procedures of administering internal and external grants are given in the “**Research Grants Management Directory.**”

1. The Central Research Bureau (CRB)

As far the financing of research projects is concerned, the principal task of the CRB is to help manage internal grants and external financing before and after the grant is presented.

CRB tasks are summed up in the following:

- Using CRB as a source of storing information pertaining to internal and external grants.
- Announcement of applications for internal grants that are managed centrally including receiving and studying them and insuring that they abide by respective rules and regulations.
- Collaboration with CRB and with research development committees in the AOU branches, and updating lists of external support providers.
- Management of the Electronic Research Gate, including many tasks such as updating internal and external research finance, as well as information about finance applications that are administered centrally.
- Helping prepare external finance projects, and providing training on research writing skills, in collaboration with the supervisors of research finance in the Branches.
- Making sure that projects presented for external subsidy meet all legal and administrative requirements through cooperation with other sides related to the University and with the grants management office, and in preparing final reports. (For more details, please refer to the Research Grants and Contracts Manual).

2. Branch Research Development Committee (BRDC)

Concerning issues related to research finance, the following tasks are shouldered by BRDC:

- Organize courses needed to train AOU staff on how to write research projects.
- In collaboration with the Central Research Development Committee, BRDC trains some staff members on how to supervise research financing to enable them to help determine internal and external finance opportunities

provided for possible applicants, and on preparing early and final projects for research financing.

- Receive, review, accept, reject or amend internal applications for financing research projects administered by each AOU Branch in accordance with the terms stated in the invitation to apply for the project and within the limits of the budget allocated for the same, commensurate with AOU rules and regulations.
- Encourage and support staff's search for external fund sources, preparing a record of all agencies and programs which provide such financing, and constantly updating this record especially in the country where the AOU branch is located.
- Observing the progress made and the timely completion of internally and externally supported projects according to the details provided by the scholarship project.

3. The Central Committee for Academic Research (CCAR)

Concerning the financing of academic research the CCAR does the following:

- Receive, review, accept, reject or amend applications for research grants in accordance with the conditions stated in call for the respective application within the limits of the assigned budget and commensurate with AOU priorities and regulations.
- Establish a central register for regional and international research funding agencies and programmes and continually updating this register. Encourage and support inter-branch and inter-college applications for external research funding.
- Assessing applications made by AOU branches to set up seminars and conferences. Selection must be made in line with AOU priorities and within available budgets.

Article (6): Internal Research Grants

A. The Framework and General Principles:

1. The Priorities:

There are four types of research:

- Basic Pure Research
- Basic Strategic Research
- Applied Research
- Experimental Progress Research

Although all the mentioned research types deserve support and finance, the Arab Open University's grants aim for supporting applied research in the first instance. This priority draws upon the University's message and its efforts in contribution to the development of knowledge which enhances economic and social development (in general).

2. Equal Opportunities

- Different types of grants target multiple goals. However all grants are assessed in a competitive manner. Moreover, AOU grants are announced four times a year: in September, December, March and June via the Electronic Research Gate, and via the emails sent to respective persons. This operation is subject to a transparent system of evaluation according to the selection norms stated in the Research Grants Administration Guide.
- A full-time staff member, whose tenancy period covers the period mentioned in the research grant application form, or he expects his contract to be renewed, can apply for a research grant. Some full-time administrative employees can apply for a research grant provided that the research topic is related to his/her current or future job (after insuring that he meets the employment contract specifics referred to above).

3. Publication of Research Results

When the research grants are given, the receivers are expected to produce high-quality research papers which are publishable. During the process of evaluating the research paper, the assigned committee undertakes a thorough examination aimed at judging whether this paper can be published for those who were unable to publish their papers for which they had received a research grant and that was stipulated in the grant agreement. In such cases, it is possible that the internal grant is withheld.

B. Approving the grant and the budget:

- The AOU provides a budget for each branch and a mother budget on the HQ level for supporting research projects. The research development committees in the branches receive, review, select and finance these projects in not more than 10,000 US dollars each.
- Some of these grants shall have a ceiling: research projects costing more than \$10,000 shall be referred to the Central Committee for Academic Research through the assigned channels. (Please see the **Research Grants and Contracts Administration Bylaws**). Moreover, all research projects which involve initiatives pertaining to several branches shall be dealt with under the umbrella of the Central Committee for Academic Research.
- The central and branch budgets ought to determine earlier the percentage that shall be earmarked for each type of research grant programmes, and for budget purposes not more than two types can be merged under one budget item with some flexibility maintained. Furthermore, within the limits of certain conditions specified in the budget project based on logical justifications, it is possible to transfer financial provisions of a certain category of research grants into another category.

C. Types of Internal Grants

- Internal grants aim to develop and support research activities undertaken by staff members in the aim of ameliorating their knowledge and stressing the significance of

doing research for upgrading social and economic development. For these aims to be accomplished, several types of research support programmes are established and each one achieves a certain objective.

1. Applied Research Grants

- Applied Research Grants aim to link the University with the industrial sector and with the local community. Such types of grants can finance projects that did not succeed to attract external financing. They also seek to find solutions to social and economic problems, as well as raising the standards of academic research at AOU.
- All teaching staff members have the right to apply for applied research grants. Similarly, they have the right to apply for a grant of joint research of not more than \$15,000.
- Projects in which AOU branches take part may receive support from HQ and/or from the contributing branches.

2. Small Projects Grants

It is possible to apply for a small project grant in order to collect information necessary for preparing applications for external support. Such applications shall be taken into attention if the project has a strong chance to receive additional support in research areas of interest to AOU priorities. The grant may reach \$5,000.

3. The Cooperation Fund between the Local Community and the Industrial Sector

- This fund shall finance new or existing initiatives in the aim of starting or increasing research cooperation with the local community and/or the industrial sector.
- The fund relies on combined financing. It may include joint research works. External funding contributes to not less than 50% of the cost of the project.
- The projects financed by this fund must be creative and finding new solutions. As for projects based on already known traditional solutions, they shall not be receiving support from this fund.
- The fund representing cooperation between the local community and the industrial sector shall include projects that had received a previous grant or had not received such a grant. The judges in this case shall be experts from the industrial sector.

4. Grants for Beginners or New Employees

- Such grants are offered for two purposes:
 - The first purpose is to encourage beginners (teaching staff below the rank of Assistant Professor) in the aim of boosting their job development.

- The second aim is to support the academic staff irrespective of their rank in order to carry out research projects linked to the University's priorities.

- On the whole, this grant can reach up to \$3,000 for individual projects and up to \$5,000 for joint projects (provided that those who receive it belong to category of new teaching staff or to the category of beginners in employment).

5. Grants for Institutional Research

- Such grants aim to support research projects that measure the performance of the University or its branches within a certain area and/or projects that attempt to discover new ways of achieving excellence on the level of the whole university or one of its branches.

- The initiative for this type of research may come from HQ, from a certain branch, a teaching staff member, (or a group of them).

- When the project is related to a single branch, the financing shall be drawn from this branch and from HQ too in general. Moreover, institutional research projects can be supported anytime provided that financing is available.

6. Research Excellence Prize

- This prize is not given only in recognition of the distinguished scientific contributions of teaching staff members, but also to augment their current and future research activities and projects. This prize is given annually to a teaching staff member in each college and it is not linked to a specific research work (but to research activities as a whole).

- Nominations for this prize shall be made by the end of December each year by the Dean based upon the relevant college committee decision. The evaluation process is undertaken by the Central Committee for Academic Research which may seek advice from outside the University. The prize can be withheld if there is no suitable candidate in a certain college. The prize is set at the value of \$3,000.

7. Seminar and Conference Grants

- The AOU encourages holding seminars and conferences that aim to augment research excellence in the areas of interest to a certain branch and/or the University as a whole.

- Support priority shall be given to seminars and conferences that lead to the publication of their studies in the form of papers, studies or books. The organizers of such activities may seek financing and sponsorship from external sources. Obtaining such support is an indication of the importance of the topic of the proposed activity.

- A series of seminars may receive a sum of \$3,000, while a conference support sum could reach \$5,000. This, however, does not include regional or international conferences that are organized centrally because their budget shall come from the central budget.

- Teaching staff members who intend to present their research papers in conferences held outside the University may apply to this grant programme on the condition that their

research is up to high standards and has a large publication chance. The maximum sum awarded for conference participation is \$2,000.

Article (7): External Financing

- The AOU encourages and supports applications that seek to obtain external financing. There are lists of institutions and agencies that provide such financing and available programmes. These lists are constantly updated. The small grants programme aims to increase the chances of securing external financing. The same is also true of the matching funding programmes and of the fund of cooperation between the local community and the industry.

- Teaching staff members should continually develop their research project writing skills. They may be assisted in preparing such projects by the persons in charge of project finance and by the Central Research Bureau. Moreover, the Central Research Bureau, the Research Development Committees based in the branches, as well as The Central Committee for Academic Research can provide assistance in any negotiation process with the agencies that provide financing and the partners, in addition to their roles shown in Article (5) section "B".

- Those who had obtained external financing may apply for exemption from teaching or administrative duties wholly or partially for a specific period in cases when they had obtained financial support that covers their salary wholly or partially.

Article (8): Publication Support

- The Central Committee for Academic Research can revise applications to publish books produced via seminars or conferences organized by teaching staff in the branches or centrally, at the request of a publishing house.

- Such publishing house ought to have a wide reputation regionally or internationally. The published material ought to be of high caliber in the diffusion of knowledge and in dissemination of the AOU's reputation. In the process of evaluating such research works, external assessors must be included to measure their publication chances. As for the sum needed to support the project in view, each case needs to be discussed separately.

Article (9): The Electronic Research Gate

- The Electronic Research Gate takes the form of a store for types of information related to research in the Arab Open University regarding research grants and contracts. This Gate contains all information about internal financing of research projects including calls for applications as well as a list of external research financing agencies and their programmes and the announcements made thereof, their policies, and their measures, as well as similar information regarding AOU research-related committees, offices and employees associated with administering research grants at the University. Also involved are the persons involved in training to write electronic research projects as well as the list

of projects which were financed in the past and which are being financed currently, and other related information.

- The Electronic Research Gate facilitates the process of submitting electronic applications to receive internal grants, and allows the applicants to follow up the decision-making process regarding their application. It also allows adding reports which show the progress made in the research project as requested.

- The Gate also includes a research container that includes teaching staff members' research papers and studies. This research container is linked to the University's electronic library and to the Google search engine.

Article (10): General Provisions

A) The present bylaws shall repeal all previous regulations governing research grants policy at AOU.

B) University Rectors shall be responsible for implementing the acts of the present bylaws.

C) The University Council shall decide on any cases that are not covered by the provisions of the present bylaws.