



جامعة العربية المفتوحة
Arab Open University

AOU RESEARCH POLICY

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Glossary of Terms

AOU:	Arab Open University
Branch:	Branch of AOU
BRDC:	Branch Research Development Committees
CRDC:	Central Research Development Committee
CRO:	Central Research Office
Dean:	Dean of a college in AOU
H.Q.:	The headquarter of AOU
P.I.:	Principal Investigator
University:	Arab Open University
VP-PRD:	Vice President for Planning, Research and development

PURPOSE OF POLICY

As the University is slowly moving from being a teaching to a teaching-cum-research university, the need arises to formulate a research policy that defines research priorities and responsibilities, research management system, incentive schemes, and research conduct, and articulates these with the imperatives of advancing the University's research capacity and performance.

AOU research incentive scheme is presented in detail in 'AOU Research Grant Policy', and elucidation of ethical and professional research conduct is to be found in 'AOU Code of Research Ethics'.

1- RESEARCH TYPES AND PRIORITIES

Research is broadly defined as any form of disciplined inquiry that aims to contribute to the advancement of human knowledge.

Four types of research may be identified: pure basic research; strategic basic research, applied research, and experimental development research. The purpose of basic and experimental research "is to generate new theoretical or experimental knowledge, and the process includes thinking in a disciplined manner about why some natural or human phenomena occur. The primary motivation is to increase knowledge for the sake of understanding" ⁽¹⁾. Applied research "is original investigation undertaken to acquire new knowledge but directed towards a specific, practical aim or objective" ⁽²⁾.

Considering the present stage of research development at the University and the endeavor to substantially contribute to economic and social development of the community (comprising civil society, private sector and public sector), AOU focuses on applied research, and University internal grants are to prioritise this type. However, this does not lead to total exclusion of other types of research.

The University needs to identify some strategic (applied) research areas within and across colleges. Strategic areas include those areas that represent present research strength, are capable of attracting enough researchers from across the branches to form the critical mass needed, have the potential to generate external interest for the purposes of collaboration and/or funding, and that stand as highly relevant to community development issues.

2- RESPONSIBILITY OF ACADEMIC STAFF AND THE UNIVERSITY

All full-time members of academic staff are required to conduct research. An integral component of the University's mission is to contribute to furthering human knowledge through high quality research relevant to AOU's mission and strategies. The University's research standing is the sum total of research conducted by its academic members of staff, other members of staff, and students. Among these

categories, academic members of staff contribute most, and the research they undertake, from another side, advances their knowledge, which in turn enhances student-learning experiences.

Conducting research that yields publishable outcome is a requirement stated in the contract of the University with academic full-time members of staff, and is a major consideration when the contract is renewed.

While members of staff may take interest and action in advancing their own personal and career development, the University, from its side, is committed, and provides support to staff development. In relation to the research aspect of staff development, and to the development of the research enterprise in general, the University:

- establishes and fosters required management structures and appropriate infrastructure to support research activity and lifelong learning,
- formulates research development plans in line with University mission and strategies, and creates enabling environment for their implementation,
- provides grants and other incentives to encourage innovative research,
- develops and sustains ethical and safe research environment, and
- improves recruitment of, and retains staff with high potential to excel in research.

3- RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The management and development of research activity at the University comprises various circles, work of which complement each other: 1-the Researcher and the Principal Investigator, 2- the Dean and the College RDC, the Branch RDC, the Central Research Development Committee (Central RDC), the Central Research Office (CRO), the Vice President for Planning, Research and Development (VP-PRD).

3.1 Researcher and Principal Investigator (PI)

- The researcher's duty is to carry out research responsibility, report progress to his/her supervisor, and disseminate outcome.
- The researcher as PI has two functions; academic and managerial (management of the project).

In the management role, the PI:

- identifies funding opportunities (if the research requires that),
- prepares funding application in consultation with relevant University parties, and ensures its compliance with defined ethical, safety and other measures and rules of both the University and the sponsor,
- manages funds in line with stipulated rules and agreed term, and submits required financial reports,

- presents required progress reports and advises on any change in, or deviation from, agreed research project direction and terms, and gets clearance if this would have implication on the agreement, and
- manages, and be accountable for, all administrative aspects of the project.

In the academic role, the PI:

- defines the scope of work,
- selects team members,
- supervises all aspects of work, and ensures that it is following defined direction and scope, in line with the AOU Code of Research Ethics, and being executed to the highest level of quality,
- leads report preparation according to expectation of sponsor and to the highest measure of excellence possible, and organises appropriate dissemination as per the agreement, and
- arranges with relevant University entity for intellectual property right, if applicable.

As a matter of rule, only full-time academic member of staff, whose contract length goes beyond the expected duration of the project, is entitled to be PI. Exceptions to this have to be strongly justified and presented to the University Rector for decision-making.

Some projects allow for multiple PIs, especially when the project is multidisciplinary or dispersed location-wise and it is difficult for one PI to manage alone. Some other projects may find it appropriate to assign a co-PI.

3.2 Dean and College Research Development (College RDC Committee)

The Dean has overall responsibility to encourage, develop and support, as appropriate, active engagement of College members of academic staff in research activities. He/she forms the College RDC representing branches and consisting of the most senior staff members active in research.

In undertaking its responsibilities, the College RDC:

- organises regular seminars on research methodologies (and international developments therein) pertinent to the disciplines represented in the college,
- prepares research plans in line with University mission and strategies and College strategy, and supports, monitors, and reports on their implementation,
- facilitates the formation of inter-branch research groups for a particular project or for longer-term, and advises on their application writing for external funding and funding of the Central RDC,
- assists staff in identifying sources of finance through compilation of list of, and information on, extramural funding agencies relevant to College research,
- supports junior members of academic staff through a research mentorship scheme,

- promotes collaboration with researchers from other universities, research centres, and the community,
- inspires and encourages inter-college (multidisciplinary) research within and among branches, and
- provides regular reports to the VR-PRD and Central RDC through the Dean.

3.3 Branch Research Development Committee (Branch RDC)

The Branch RDC is chaired by, and consists of the most senior academic members of staff active in research, with representation of all colleges at the branch. The Branch Director appoints chair and members of the Committee.

In undertaking its responsibilities, the Branch RDC:

- organises seminars on University policies and manuals pertinent to research, and may request assistance on this from the Central RDC or the CRO,
- ensures training of Research Grant Advisors, who will be assisting applicants for internal and external funding (training is provided centrally),
- announces, receives and selects research project proposals submitted for internal grants (see AOU Research Grant Policy and AOU Research Grant and Contract Management Manual),
- compiles list and information on in-country research funding agencies, and encourages applications for extramural funding from inside and outside the country, and
- uses the Research Portal page of the branch on all correspondence and information provided and received.

3.4 Central Research Development Committee (Central RDC)

The Central RDC has overall responsibility of the research enterprise at the University. The Committee includes senior members of staff who are at the first-line of responsibility of research development; the VP-PRD and the Deans. The Committee is supported by the CRO.

In undertaking its responsibilities the Central RDC:

- reviews, provides advice on, and supports research development plans of the Colleges,
- manages university central grants assigned to it (for details see AOU Research Grant Policy and Research Grant and Contract Management Manual),
- develops strategic research partnerships with universities, research institutions, major community organisations, and regional and international development agencies,
- explores opportunities for research funding in form of gifts from various research and development funding agencies, and from charity organisations,

- organises conferences and symposia on contemporary themes related to the University scope of work,
- encourages and supports inter-branch and inter-college research projects,
- trains Research Grant Advisors in the branches (at least two in every branch) and in the H.Q to assist academic members of staff in selecting and applying for internal and external funding,
- provides assistance to Branch RDCs in organising seminars on University research policies and manuals, when requested,
- receives and provides feedback on periodical progress reports by College RDCs and Branch RDCs, and
- uses the Research Portal on all correspondence and information provided and received.

3.5 Vice President for Planning, Research and Development (VP-PRD)

The VP-PRD is accountable to the Rector on all issues related to the research enterprise at the University. With administrative and technical support by the CRO and other parties, the VP-PRD:

- drafts strategy, policies, rules and guidelines pertinent to research, and submits them through the Rector for approval by the relevant University bodies,
- prepares central research budget and controls expenditure in accordance with set budget lines and established financial rules,
- chairs the Central RDC,
- receives progress reports from Deans, Branch Directors and CRO on their research activities,
- submits reports on research activities to the relevant University bodies through the Rector, and
- manages, together with the CRO, intellectual property rights of the University.

3.6 Central Research Office (CRO)

The CRO is the central administrative and coordinating unit of research activities at the University. It provides administrative and technical support to the VP-PRD and the Central RDC, and:

- collects reports from the College RDCs and Branch RDCs and prepares them for presentation to the VP-PRD and the Central RDC,
- checks compliance with the internal and sponsor's rules of all research proposals submitted for external funding, and examines and administers applications for internal grants submitted to the Central RDC (see AOU Research Grant Policy and AOU Research Grant and Contract Management Manual),
- compiles a central list of, and information on, research funding agencies relevant to the AOU in countries where the University has branches, in the region, and internationally, in collaboration with the Branch RDCs and the College RDCs, and makes this available through the Research Portal,

- manages the content of the Research Portal pertinent to the H.Q., and
- assists in organising training on research policies and manuals for branches, when required.

4- RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

The University should foster a research environment wherein ethical values are preserved: health and safety, confidentiality, transparency, objectivity, integrity, justice, social responsibility, cultural sensitivity, and accountability. While researchers are granted freedom in selecting their research subject matter, methods of inquiry, and resultant output, they and their research methods, management and outcomes should not violate those ethical values (see AOU Code of Research Ethics for details).

Researchers should follow all university policies, rules and procedures, and rules of the sponsor, in case of externally funded research, when conducting research. Their research outcome should be subject to scrutiny by peers.

All researchers- members of academic staff, students and others conducting research at or on behalf of the University, should get training in responsible conduct of research. Deans and College RDCs, and Branch Directors Branch RDCs are to ensure that researchers are getting the required training. Training on responsible conduct of research is organised online or face to face, in both cases in groups.

5- OPENNESS OF RESEARCH

Since dissemination of knowledge is one of the major goals of the University, the University is committed to openness in research, and expects that research outcome is to be publically available through publication or another type of dissemination. This expectation may be subject to qualification, if the University or the external funding agency has intellectual property right, and the need to protect the value of potentially commercialisable intellectual property necessitates a delayed publication. Such delay has to be agreed on, and the delay period specified, in the agreement with the sponsor.

The University does not accept conducting research by its staff and students in its premises or using its funds that is considered secret. If the researcher or the University receives essential information from the funding agency or a third party that is considered classified, upholding confidentiality and privacy of the information should not impede the right to publish research outcome. Otherwise, such information is not to be used.

It is the responsibility of the PI to inform the University authority to who he/she is reporting of any confidentiality condition in the terms of agreement with an external funding agency before the agreement is signed.

If the funding agency is given the right to publish the outcome of the research and changes are made without the approval of the researcher and the University, the University and the researcher have the right to withhold stating their names on the publication.

6- RESEARCH RECORDS

Research records must be properly archived and maintained, and doing that is the responsibility of the PI (in the first place) and the University, both of who have the right to access and use the records. Unless otherwise agreed with the sponsor, research property resulting from research undertaken under the auspices of the University belongs to it. Research records “include those documents, records and materials captured by or for a researcher that are necessary to document, reconstruct, evaluate and validate research results and the events and the processes leading to the acquisition of those documents”⁽³⁾. They include, among other forms, administrative or published information (original, photocopied or computer downloaded files), survey documents, interviews (noted or voice-recorded), correspondence and transcripts.

The University responsibility of keeping and maintaining records arises from, but not limited to, the need to⁽⁴⁾:

- comply with agreements with funding agencies,
- protect intellectual property arising from research,
- ensure appropriate management of works involving human subjects,
- enable any investigations on breaches of ethical and professional conduct, and
- preserve the right of those involved in the research work to access data and records.

Records are to be kept for as long as the above concerns may take. Students’ research records are kept until they graduate.

When researchers leave the University, they have the right to take copies of (not original) records of works in which they participated. If the PI moves to another institution before completing the project, and no arrangement is made that he/she continues with the project within the University, records may be transferred to the new institution with the approval of the Rector of the University.

7- RESEARCH LEAVE

A member of academic staff may apply for research leave to be approved by the Branch Director in consultation with the relevant Dean and the Branch RDC, if he/she meets the following conditions:

- has spent at least 6 years continuously serving the University at the time of commencement of the leave,
- has a rigorous research plan that promises to lead to publications of high quality,
- had a sound research record during his/her service, and
- that the Branch Director and the head of the unit can make arrangements, without financial implications, to cover her/his teaching and other administrative responsibilities during the leave.

The research leave may be granted for up to 12 months. The staff member will be paid 75% of his/her full salary, with the remaining 25% withheld until the satisfactory completion of the leave. The staff member is allowed to make arrangements for sponsorship by a third party.

The staff member is to submit a report within 3 months of completing the leave. If he/she is evaluated by both the Branch Director and the relevant Dean as fully accomplishing the plan of the leave, he/she will be paid the withheld 25%. In case no agreement is reached between the Dean and the Branch Director, the Rector decides.

The staff member is to sign an undertaking to serve the university for two more years after the research leave. It is the discretion of the University to continue employing the staff member for those two years.

8- RESEARCH CENTRES

Research centres play a pivotal role in advancing research profile of universities, and in realising their mission. They contribute substantially to enriching academic life and heightening community engagement, as well as creating new, and ripening existing interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary relationships.

8.1 Principles

The following represents the general principles governing the establishment of research centres at AOU.

- A research centre at AOU is a formally constituted university entity, establishment of which is to be approved by the University Board of Trustees, and it:
 - must have clearly defined mission and objectives consistent with University mission and goals, and with College strategy, if it is established within a single College.
 - is normally, but not necessarily, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature, involving inter-college and inter-branch cooperation.
 - could be established jointly or in partnership with another (other) external institution(s).
 - cooperates with researchers from other universities, research centres and community organisations (including industry).
 - focuses on, and substantially contributes to research, but may combine research with training and/or teaching and/or cost-recovery consultancy service.
 - normally does not require appointment of new full-time academic staff.
 - has a critical mass of researchers within the University interested in its objectives and scope of work , and are committed to allocate part of their time to it.
 - has adequate financial resources and is able to attract extramural funding.

8.2 Governance

A research centre must:

- have its own by-laws stating, among others, mission, objectives, physical location, partnerships, membership, accountability lines. governing board and its composition and meetings, appointment of the director, finances and reporting systems,
- be governed by a board recommended by the Rector and approved by the Board of Trustees,
- have a director accountable to the Dean (who is then accountable to the VR Research) in case the centre is established within a college, and otherwise directly to the VR Research,
- be subject to regular reviews, nature and composition of which are to be stipulated in the by-laws,
- define conditions, responsibilities and rights of membership, and
- state the name of the University (and its logo) alongside its name.

9- INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHT

This section establishes the University policy toward ownership of intellectual property right of works created by University members of staff and students.

9.1 Copyright, Patent and Invention ⁽⁵⁾

- Common understanding of copyright is that it “is the ownership and control of the intellectual property in original works of authorship”. Subject to certain limitations and exceptions, “the copyright owner has the exclusive right to reproduce the work, prepare derivative works, distribute copies by sale or otherwise, and display or perform the work publicly”.
- “An invention is a novel and useful idea relating to processes, machines, manufactures, and compositions of matter”.
- A patent is a permission issued by a Government or a union of governments (e.g. the European Union) “giving an inventor the right to exclude all others from making, using or selling the invention” within the territory of the granting Government.

9.2 Intellectual Property Ownership, Disclosure and Governance ⁽⁶⁾

The University retains copy right ownership in the following cases:

- University-funded works,
- Works initiated by the University for specific purposes,
- Works that have been developed overtime, building on previous findings of numerous members of staff and/or students,

- Course materials,
- Works performed by members of staff and students substantially using university resources, and
- Works performed by University employees in the normal course of their employment.

In all other cases, University employees and students as authors own the copyright of their works, unless these rights have been granted to a third party.

Works by external individuals or organisations hired by the University as consultants or contractors are owned by them, unless specified otherwise in the agreement.

Authors may request re-transference of copyright ownership of their works, ownership of which has been retained by the University for any of the conditions mentioned above. The University Rector is the authority to decide whether to allow or deny the re-transference. In the case of allowing re-transference of ownership to the author, the University shares with the author any royalties derived from the work.

Authors retain the moral rights in their works falling under the ownership of the University, and have the right to use it for no-personal gain purposes, and are not permitted to passing it to a third party, unless the University Rector grants such a permission. In this case the third party will not be permitted to use it for commercial purposes.

If a creator/author believes that her, his or their work has a reasonable chance of a commercial value, a disclosure form is to be completed explaining the nature of the IP and how it may be of commercial interest to the University. The University then decides to claim the IP, or share it with, or license it, or assign it to, the creator(s) or author(s).

The intellectual property right is managed by the VR-PRD and the CRO. In case an author or a creator disputes a decision by the VR-PRD, he/she may appeal to the Rector, who will then form a committee to meet with the author/creator, and submit its recommendation. The Rector decision is final.

10- RESEARCH PORTAL

The Research portal is a repository of all information pertinent to research at the AOU. It provides access to all research-related policies and manuals, and allows submission of research proposals and monitoring of their progress (see AOU Research Grant Policy).

Using the Portal, colleges and branches submit their research reports online, following a template available in the portal. The Portal will also be used for any correspondence related to the research activity at the AOU. Part of the portal is publicly accessible, which comprises lists of accomplished and on-going research activities at the AOU and other materials, meant to publicise, and promote dissemination of, research output of the AOU.

ENDNOTES

1- University of the Western Cape, 2009 p.1.

2- Department of Education and Training, Government of Australia, 2015 p.5.

3- University of Alberta, 2013, web document-no page number.

4- The part of this section following the endnote mark draws on Stanford University, Chapter One of a web document accessed in November, 2015; no page numbering.

5- Ibid, quotations are extracted from Chapter Nine; no page numbering.

6- This section draws on: Northwestern University (2015), Stanford University (web accessed in November2015), University of Toronto (web accessed in December, 2015), and Victoria University of Wellington (web accessed in December, 2015)

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