

# MUNI UNIVERSITY



## RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND (MUNIRIF) GUIDELINES

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DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE TRAINING, RESEARCH AND  
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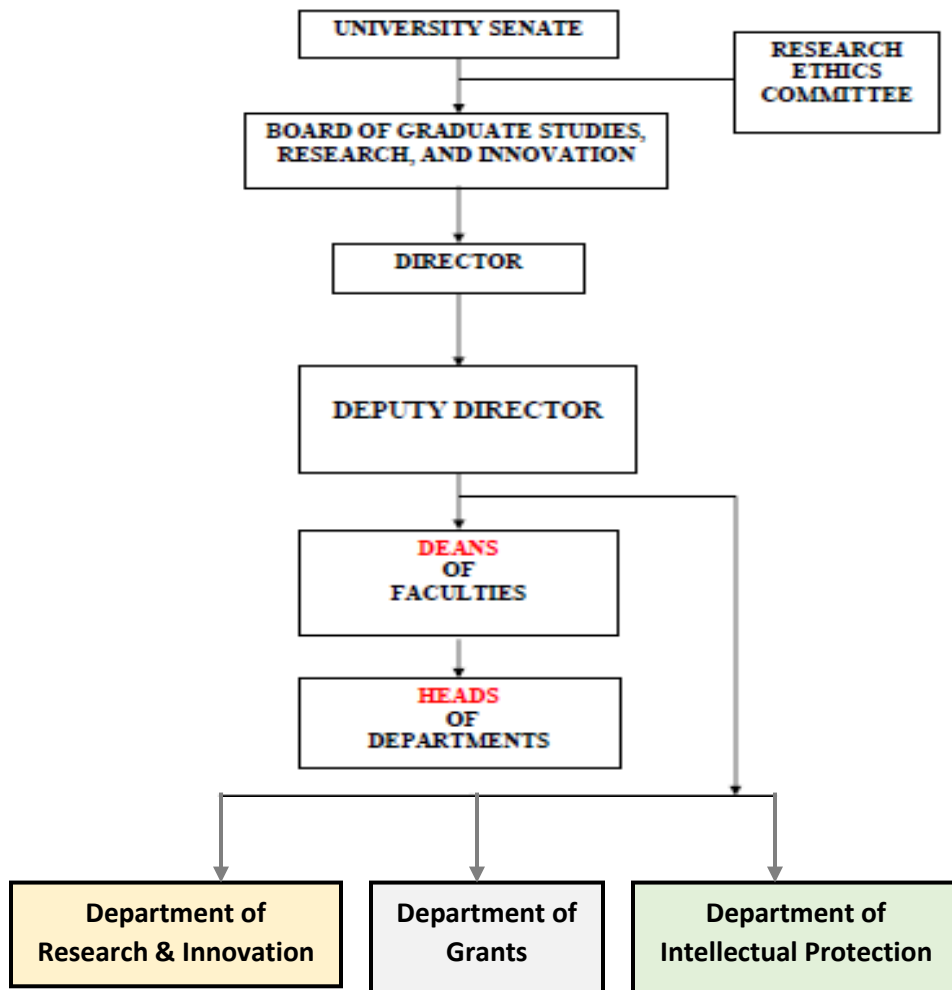
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## 1.0 DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE TRAINING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

### 1.1 ABOUT DGTRI

The Directorate of Graduate Training, Research and Innovation (DGTRI) at Muni University was fully operationalized in 2022, however, some of its activities were initially implemented under the Research and Innovation Department. Structurally, DGTRI reports to the University Senate through the Board of Graduate Training, Research Innovation (BoGTRI). The Graduate Training arm of DGTRI links with faculties and departments while the Research and Innovation arm has three departments, namely; Research and Innovation, Grants, and Intellectual Property Protection. The Muni University Research Ethics Committee (REC) will report directly to Senate (**Fig 1**).

*DGTRI's Vision* is “graduate training, research and innovation transforming communities and the economy”  
*Our mission* is to facilitate top-notch graduate training and transformative research and innovation at Muni University.



*Figure1: Structure of DGTRI and linkage with other University units*

## 1.2 Roles of DGTRI at Muni University

- i. Coordinate graduate training, research and innovation;
- ii. Develop, review and promote policies and guidelines that support graduate training, research, innovation and community engagement;
- iii. Harmonize the development, review and implementation of graduate programmes;
- iv. Mobilize funding to support graduate training, research, innovation and community engagement;
- v. Develop and nature strategic partnerships to foster graduate training, research, innovation and community engagement;
- vi. Facilitate research communication, networks and partnerships both nationally and internationally;
- vii. Undertake innovative research and community engagement;
- viii. Support faculties in identification of graduate supervisors and external examiners;
- ix. Encourage research, innovation and community outreach by the members of the University community;
- x. Enhance staff and graduate students' capacity in developing grant proposals and scientific writing;
- xi. Manage the Muni University Research Fund (MUNIRIF) and any other research and innovation funds received by Muni University.
- xii. Promote the dissemination of research findings.

## 2.0 MUNI UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUND (MUNIRIF)

### 2.1 Rationale of MUNIRIF

To transition to middle-income status, low-income countries must increasingly invest in research and innovations that provide solutions to persistent development challenges. Universities should be at the fore-front of driving this research agenda. The Government of Uganda is currently implementing the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Development Plan (NDPIII 2021 – 2025) and Uganda Vision 2040. However, the NDP III and sector specific plans require research to fill evidence gaps. **The aim of the Research and Innovation Fund (RIF) is to support Research and Innovation initiatives that contribute to better delivery of national development initiatives in all sectors critical to the economy.**

From 2022/23 Financial year, the Government of the Republic started appropriating to Muni University a special funding to support high impact Research and Innovations. The fund illustrates the increasing importance that the Government attaches to the role of universities in undertaking Research and Innovation as a driver of socio-economic transformation. **The main objective of the Research and Innovation Fund is to increase the local generation of translatable research and scalable innovations that address key gaps required to drive Uganda's development agenda as outlined in NDPIII.** The fund is aimed at complementing other funding streams mobilized by Muni University to contribute to community transformation and national development.

Muni University will use the MUNIRIF to support new ideas that respond to a widely consultative Research Agenda focused on national priorities. Projects should be designed to cover one year however; multi-year projects may receive extension after demonstrating their commercialization/scaling potential.

## 2.2 Principles of MUNIRIF

The Muni University RIF will be guided by the following principles:

- i. ***A commitment to results and impact*** - This grant is committed to results and impact. The expectation is that researchers will address the most pressing development issues and that the findings generated from the research and innovation activities supported by this grant will be of use to policy makers, program implementers or the private sector including industry. Research teams ought to demonstrate attainment of tangible and useful deliverables within **one (1) year of implementation**, including projects that require multi-year funding.
- ii. ***Equity and inclusion*** - Measures will be taken to ensure that **units** across the university will benefit from the fund. The Grants Management Committee (GMC) will ensure that female researchers and junior staff are well represented in the successful project teams. However, equity will not mean equal allocation, because the nature, capacity and cost of research and innovation initiatives differ considerably across disciplines and academic units.
- iii. ***Multi-disciplinarity*** - The development challenges we are seeking to solve require more than the effort of one sector. It is therefore important that researchers demonstrate a multi-disciplinary approach to the research-to-translation continuum, reflected through the problems selected, the technical proposals, and their team composition.
- iv. ***Accountability and utilization of funds*** - To protect the University's and the researchers' reputation and ensure continuity of the funding, accountability for the RIF will be of utmost importance. All funds disbursed shall be accounted for in a timely way and to acceptable standards as specified in Muni University financial management guidelines. PIs will be required to submit both technical and financial reports according to a timeframe specified in the grant award letters/agreements. The GMC will therefore regularly track all awardee performance. Researchers with substantial accountability arrears and those who do not utilize allocated funds within stipulated time frames will in the absence of an acceptable justification be temporarily suspended from accessing these funds in the future.

## 2.3 Management of MUNIRIF

- i The MUNIRIF will be managed by the Directorate of Graduate Training, Research and Innovation (DGTRI) through the Grants Management Committee (GMC). The Grants Officer will be responsible for day-to-day operations under MUNIRIF and other grants mobilized by the university and its staff.
- ii DGTRI will establish and operationalize a Grants Management Committee (GMC) and provide secretarial services to the GMC.
- iii DGTRI will develop the Terms of Reference for GMC
- iv DGTRI and GMC shall periodically conduct comprehensive stakeholder consultations to identify priority thematic areas of interest to national development. These consultations will

include meetings with faculties and other units within Muni University, private sector, civil society, industry and local government, among others. DGTRI will triangulate such information with that from national development plans and the Muni University Strategic Plan to arrive at the priority focus of MUNIRIF.

### 3.0 ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

#### 3.1 Target beneficiaries

- i. MUNIRIF targets researchers and innovators from Muni University. This includes Muni University academic and other staff who hold a valid appointment issued by Muni University.
- ii. Academic staff from all faculties of Muni University are eligible to apply as well as staff from other supporting units.
- iii. Individual researchers/innovators or research/innovation teams will be required to have a letter of support from the Head of the academic unit under which the lead researcher is based.
- iv. Researchers/innovators from other institutions are not eligible to apply as Principal Investigators (PIs) or Co-PIs. However, such researchers/innovators can be included as co-investigators and a justification has to be provided on the unique expertise which such a researcher(s) or innovator(s) will bring to the project team.
- v. Students of Muni University may also be included as part of the team provided the work to be undertaken by such students will contribute to their research projects.
- vi. Collaborations with research personnel from government agencies, civil society organizations, independent research institutions, business and industry is encouraged but they have to provide letters of support/commitment.
- vii. Registered students of Muni University can access innovation grants in groups of 5-10 under the leadership of an academic supervisor or mentor.

#### 3.2 Eligibility criteria for Research/Innovation Teams

To be eligible for funding, a **research/innovation team** should meet the following criteria:

- i. The Principal Investigator (PI) shall be an **academic staff** with a minimum of Master's degree in their areas of specialization;
- ii. The PI shall be on a full-time contract and actively in Muni University service (not on study or sabbatical leave).
- iii. The PI shall obtain a letter of support from his/her unit within the university.
- iv. A researcher/innovator cannot be a PI on more than one (1) grant application.
- v. For each application, it is a requirement to indicate a Co-PI who will be co-signatory to the contract upon award and will be jointly responsible for the results;
- vi. The Co-PI shall hold a minimum of Master's degree in their areas of specialization;
- vii. Researchers/innovators from Muni University are encouraged to collaborate with resource persons from civil society organizations, government sectors, other universities within and outside Uganda, independent research institutions, business and industry as part of their teams. In such cases, the external team members will provide a letter of support from their institution.
- viii. Students of Muni University are not eligible to apply as PIs or Co-PIs though they can participate in research teams as part of their special projects. However, students with strong

innovation ideas are encouraged to form teams of 5 -10 people under the guidance of an academic supervisor/ mentor and apply for an innovation grant (details in section 6).

- ix. PIs who already hold an active MUNIRIF award (MUNIRIF-1, 2 etc.) may be eligible to apply for the next MUNIRIF call on condition that they will only be considered for award if prior to the final selection process, they will have achieved 70% of the project deliverables and accounted for more than half of the funds received.
- x. If the PI leaves Muni University for whatever reason, the Co-PI takes over the leadership of the project and the project team shall designate another member as CO-PI.

## 4.0 THE GRANT PROCESS

### 4.1 Submission of applications

Under the MUNIRIF Round 1, submission of applications will be done by e-mail to [grants@muni.ac.ug](mailto:grants@muni.ac.ug) but the DGTRI will develop an on-line platform to manage the application process in subsequent calls. If an applicant experiences any challenges in the submission process, they should send an email to [grants@muni.ac.ug](mailto:grants@muni.ac.ug). Each MUNIRIF call round will clearly indicate the date of the call opening and the deadline for receiving the grant applications. Applicants will be advised to prepare their submissions on-time since the application timelines will be strictly followed.

### 4.2 Application form

The GMC will develop the application form template which will later be made accessible on-line. Applicants are encouraged to read and understand all the key requirements of the different sections of the form so as to provide all the critical information required within the word limits provided.

### 4.3 Rules governing applications

All applications should be written in English. All applications should be submitted via the email provided above and in subsequent calls through an on-line platform. Complete applications must be **submitted not later than 11:59 pm East African Time on the closing date**. No submissions after closure of applications will be accepted. Any attempt at solicitation of acceptance beyond this date will not be entertained. The GMC bears no responsibility for submissions that are not completed in time and incomplete submissions will not be considered for evaluation. If none of the submitted applications meets the requirements to receive a grant, the call may be reopened at the sole discretion of the GMC. An individual researcher should not submit more than one application as a PI. **However, it is allowable for a PI Or other members of the team to be a team member on another one (1) other project.**

Researchers/innovators agree to assume any and all risks, and to waive claims against Muni University and the GMC for any injury, death, damage, or loss of property, revenue, or profits, whether direct, indirect, or consequential, arising from their participation in this grant implementation.

### 4.4 Applicant support

**Sensitization:** The GMC will hold a physical or virtual meeting to present key aspects of the grant. Where need arises, subsequent sessions shall be held with the different units on dates agreed between the unit and the GMC.

**Q&A:** Applicants will have an opportunity to ask questions and obtain answers/clarifications regarding MUNIRIF or any part of the application process. The question submission period will be specified in the call for applications. Questions will be submitted to [grants@muni.ac.ug](mailto:grants@muni.ac.ug). The Questions and Answers will be posted to staff via general staff e-mail and in subsequent calls on the FAQ section on the on-line platform by a date specified in the call for proposals.

#### 4.5 Review and evaluation of applications

A three (3) step application evaluation process will be used.

- **Step 1: Determination of eligibility.** This will be conducted by the GMC Secretariat at DGTRI to select only those applications that fit within the eligibility criteria specified in the call.
- **Step 2: Detailed technical review.** This will be undertaken by an independent team of credible reviewers (national and international experts) appointed by the GMC and aligned to the technical expertise required under the different grant applications. The review process will take a **cross-disciplinary approach in which in addition to subject matter experts, reviewers from other disciplines that align with the core-discipline of the research idea will be engaged.** Reviewers will conduct scoring of the applications based on a template with standardized criteria developed by the GMC. **Each proposal will be reviewed by at least two (2) reviewers.** A shortlist of the reviewed proposals will be provided to the GMC for final selection.
- **Step 3: Selection the best proposals.** The GMC will select from the best-scored proposals the ones to be funded. This will be strongly guided by the scores and recommendations from Step 2. However, the GMC will also consider additional aspects such as alignment with the national development priorities and Muni University Strategic plan, as well as impact within the relevant sector, equity between academic units, consideration of gender and junior staff, the budgets and the funds available.

**NOTE:** All applications will go through the strict **3-phase review and evaluation** in accordance with the MUNIRIF guidelines. Applicants may be asked to answer questions or respond to queries from reviewers or GMC if needed via email. **E-mail messages sent to PIs with a copy to Co-PIs in this case will have an expiry period of 72 hours.**

#### 4.6 Notification of successful applicants

Successful applicants (PIs and Co-Ips) will be informed by email provided in the cover page of their applications and/or used for submission of the applications. Successful teams will also be profiled on the DGTRI webpage. **Researchers should be aware of the fact that the grant application is a competitive process and as such not all applicants should expect to be funded; however, all applicants will receive a notification of their application status at the end of the review process.** In case an applicant is not satisfied with the GMC decision, they should **submit an appeal to the Director, DGTRI within seven (7) days from the date of publishing the results and will receive a response within fourteen (14) days.** The redress committee shall consist of Director DGTRI (Secretary), University Secretary, Vice Chancellor (chair) and University Legal Officer. The GMC will ensure to be as impartial and as technical as possible in the selection process to ensure that the best projects win. **GMC members shall serve with diligence and shall not participate as members of the research/innovation teams submitting grant applications.**

#### 4.7 Post award processes

The GMC and its Secretariat (DGTRI) will conduct a series of post-award activities with the grant awardees. These will be focused on ensuring that the set milestones are achieved, the evidence of



anticipated deliverables is available and that funds are accounted for in a timely manner. In particular, support processes will include:

- **Induction:** A brief post award induction, in form of an induction workshop which will be mandatory before signing the contracts
- **Procurement plan:** Before signing contracts, successful awardees will be required to develop a procurement plan covering all procurable items in their budgets and has to be done in consultation with Muni University Procurement Unit
- **Contracting:** The GMC will execute an agreement with the awardees on the terms and conditions of the award. GMC will develop the award template.
- **Capacity building:** The GMC Secretariat (DGTRI) may where necessary, provide inductive orientation for researchers (open to both awardees and non-awardees) on: (i) Project Management and reporting; (ii) Financial Management and reporting; (ii) Research Leadership and teamwork (iv) Gender and inclusiveness in research and (v) Dissemination and commercialization of research.
- **Release of funds:** Release of funds will be in phases incumbent on proper accountability and demonstration of milestones achieved in the previous payment phase. The funds disbursement schedule will be provided in the grant award agreement.
- **Tracking of deliverables, performance and accountability:** The GMC will conduct continuous checks on awardees to ensure deliverables are met, funds are utilized, and releases are accounted for. Consistent failure to demonstrate deliverables or utilize funds may lead to issuance of unspent balances to other grantees. Therefore, for avoidance of large amounts of unspent balances, the GMC will maintain a dynamic tracking of performance of projects and may decide to reallocate non-performing awards to those that may require more resources.
- **Reporting:** Awardee researchers will provide interim reports every three (3) months using a standard reporting form that will be provided by the GMC.

#### 4.8 Intellectual property

Intellectual Property (IP) under MUNIRIF will be based on the Muni University Intellectual Property Policy. The IP derived through MUNIRIF will be owned jointly by the awardee teams and Muni University. For research/innovation outputs that have a commercial value, researchers will clearly delineate any intellectual property included that is their creation. The GMC will undertake a determination of what percentage of stake Muni University will claim on the basis of its investment into the idea. Notwithstanding this, the researchers will retain the bulk of the claim to intellectual property arising from their research/innovation. All proceeds accruing from commercialization of IP generated via MUNIRIF, following the conclusion of the grant period will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis amongst the parties, but with the researchers taking a controlling stake.

#### 4.9 Grant timeline

For every round of the MUNIRIF Call, a grant timeline will be issued by the GMC indicating the major milestones and corresponding dates as shown below.

<i>Milestone</i>	<i>Date</i>
1. Issuance of request for applications (e-mail)	
2. Researcher sensitization meeting (physical or virtual)	
3. Q&A period (e-mail)	
4. Closing date for applications (11.59 pm)	
5. Determination of eligibility	
6. Detailed technical review	
7. Selection the best proposals	
8. Award notification (e-mail)	
9. Induction and award letters/agreements	
10. Notification of unsuccessful applicants (e-mail)	

## 5.0 PROPOSAL FORTMAT

### 5.1 Introduction

The GMC will develop the MUNIRIF proposal guidelines to be used by all potential applicants to develop their proposals and this may vary from call to call. The guidelines will also facilitate a systematic review of the proposals.

The proposal guidelines may vary depending on the focus of the particular MUNIRIF call but will generally consist of the sections represented under 5.2. **The proposal shall be in English, Times New Roman, Font size 12, spacing of 1.5; margins of 1 inch on all sides and submitted in Micro-Soft Word Format.**

### 5.2 Proposal template

The GMC shall issue a detailed proposal template for each call which will consist of the following sections.

- i. Cover page
- ii. Problem
- iii. Proposed solution
- iv. Outputs, outcomes and impact
- v. Team composition
- vi. Provision for capacity development
- vii. Dissemination Plan/Scalability/Sustainability
- viii. Ethical implications and Environmental Impact
- ix. Conflict of interest declaration
- x. Summary budget
- xi. The budget will include the following subsections:
  - a. Personnel costs – excluding salaries for staff who are paid by the government.
  - b. Travel
  - c. Supplies and services
  - d. Equipment
  - e. Program activity costs
  - f. Dissemination
- xii. Workplan – for one year only

## 6.0 STUDENT INNOVATION GRANT PROCESS

### 6.1 Introduction

Muni University has a strong focus on nurturing students' innovations and the University's Business Incubation Center (BIC) has played a key role in this area. The BIC has previously received support from African Development Bank, Ministry of ICT and the Mastercard Foundation through RUFORUM. BIC also runs a Research Laboratory which supports students to develop prototypes to validate their ideas. Bankable ideas from the Research Laboratory feed into the BIC for incubation and commercialization. The Grants Management Committee (GMC) will therefore allocate part of the funds under MUNIRIF as Student Innovation Grant. The grant will be accessed by students with strong innovation ideas in teams of 5 -10 people under the guidance of an academic supervisor/mentor.

### 6.2 Innovation grant process

The GMC will develop the innovation grant concepts guidelines to be used by all potential applicants and this may vary from call to call. The concept guidelines will also facilitate a systematic review of the student concepts.

The students' concepts shall be approved by the academic supervisor/mentor before being submitted to the GMC.

Evaluation of students' innovation grants concepts will involve two steps:

**1<sup>st</sup> Evaluation:** All the concepts received before the deadline shall be screened by the GMC Secretariate (DGTRI) to select those meeting the focus of the call and shortlisted applicants will be notified.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Evaluation:** Applicants shortlisted under the first evaluation shall be invited to pitch their innovations the GMC. The GMC may co-opt other persons which relevant technical expertise to participate in the evaluation of the innovations. Such invited experts shall also participate in the scoring on applications.

**Award:** The top ranked innovations shall be considered for grant award.

**Duration:** The Student Innovation grant award shall be implemented for a period of one (1) year.

### 6.3 Innovation grant template

The innovation concepts shall be 4 pages maximum and in English, Times New Roman, Font size 12, spacing of 1.5; margins of 1 inch on all sides and submitted to [grants@muni.ac.ug](mailto:grants@muni.ac.ug) in Micro-Soft Word Format.

The GMC shall issue a detailed students innovation grant concept template for each call which will consist of the following sections:

- i. Cover page
- ii. Problem
- iii. Innovation
- iv. Expected Outputs
- v. Scalability and Sustainability
- vi. Budget
- vii. Workplan