



Knowledge Innovation Excellence

Directorate of Research and Outreach

GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

at the

**LILONGWE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL
RESOURCES**

September 2015

Amended: 7 September 2015

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) has established a research fund to support academic members carrying out research projects that will generate innovative ideas leading to the development of research products or technologies with potential for up-scaling. The research funds will be coordinated and managed by the University's Director of Research and Outreach (DRO). To facilitate the awarding process of the research grant, the University Research and Publications Committee (URPC) has developed guideline for submission of full proposals. Full proposals will be submitted upon the approval of the Concept Note (CN) by the URPC.

A committee will be set up to review the full proposals. The proposals will be evaluated on their technical and scientific soundness as well as the proposed budget in relation to the outputs/deliverables.

1.1. Format of the Proposal

The research proposal must be written in English using Times Roman 12pt; 1.5 spaced and 1 inch (2.5cm) margin all round. Furthermore, the proposal shall bear the project's title, the project's acronym and the project summary, as well as its scientific content. The submission must be in Microsoft word.

The research proposals must be compact, not exceeding 20 pages excluding cover page and references. The proposal must follow the format provided and adhere to the page limits and contain the following elements:

1.1.1 Cover Page

- The title page must have the title of the project, name and contact of the Principal Investigator (PI), names and contacts of the other members of the research team.

1.1.2 Summary

Repeat the title of the research proposal across all pages for blind review as a running header.

The proposal must have a summary (Maximum one page). This may be presented in tabular or text form

- Briefly state the problem context, research question(s), objectives, justification, proposed methodology, expected results and proposed budget.
- This is a concise summary (one [age) of what appears in the proposal. It should not provide new material by referring to aspects not discussed in the proposal.

1.1.3 Keywords

Give up to six *specific* keywords or phrases, which will be used to index your research in relevant databases.

1.1.4 Statement of research problem

Present a concise statement to describe exactly the problem being investigated. Applicants should ensure that the problem and their objectives remain the focus of their research.

1.1.5 Background to the research problem

This section should present separately the background to the problem being researched. Clarify the area of concern, or what needs justify the research (this could be a sub-heading). Any information that helps the evaluator to understand the problem may be included. Indicate why you believe that it is, in fact, a researchable problem. This section could be combined with the literature review, or form a sub-section of it.

- Describe the statement of the problem (in the light of a thorough literature review).
- Purpose of the proposed research in relation to problem /define the research question(s).
- Describe the objectives, goals of the proposed research project and the research hypothesis.
- Provide rationale/justification for the research proposal

If your proposed research is multi-disciplinary, clarify which disciplines it covers, in which discipline the main thrust lies, and what interdisciplinary interaction there is with other disciplines or fields of study. Make the context of your research quite clear. Interdepartmental and multi disciplinarily in the study approach is encouraged.

1.1.6 Aims and Objectives of the research

Indicate the aims and objectives of the research. Where feasible, objectives should be divided into main and specific objectives, and should be numbered. The proposals will assess whether the objectives are well articulated and are realistic and attainable. In writing the proposal, it is important to remain focused on the objectives.

1.1.7 Hypotheses or research questions

Depending on the nature of your research, it may not be necessary to base your research on some few hypotheses. You may list certain fundamental research questions or underlying assumptions fundamental to the research proposal.

1.1.8 Significance of the proposed research

Indicate the significance of the research. Why is it important? Whom, or what will it benefit?

1.1.9 Literature review

An adequate literature review is required in all research proposals. The literature review should:

- Provide evidence to the faculty research and publications committee that you are well acquainted with past and current research in the field of study.
- Prove that the proposed will not duplicate past or current research.
- Indicate how the intended research relates to similar and past research; in other words, the literature review positions your research within the existing body of knowledge.

Literature review “must provide a base for the rationale for the problem being investigated, or a theoretical framework for the study”. The literature reviewed must therefore correspond with the aims of the research. The applicants must provide a more complete and extensive list of **References** (all sources cited) using the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing format.

1.1.10 Research design and methodology

This is a cornerstone of the research proposal and therefore a critically important section. The Applicant must demonstrate a throughout knowledge of the methods to be employed to achieve the objectives of the study so that the reviewer is satisfied that your methodology is relevant and acceptable. The Applicant can demarcate this section into subsections clarifying among others

- Proposed methods of investigation
- Target population, sample size and selection of sample
- Sources of Data
- Collection of Data
- Data Management
- Data Analysis Strategies and justification for the choice of methods
- Mechanisms to assure the quality of the study – e.g. control of bias, esure quality of data, safe storage of data

- **Equipment, materials and infrastructure:** The proposal must indicate the type of “Infrastructure” includes equipment, facilities and support services required for the accomplishment of the research and indicate whether the equipment and facilities are available.
- **Staff competence:** The proposal must indicate the proposed team members have the professional competence and experience. It is also vital to include in the Team junior staff for mentorship. Do not indicate the names of the researchers in the proposal but rather indicate the discipline.
- Ethical issues and their mitigation measures.

1.1.11 Planning and time parameters

- Proposals must provide an indication of time frame for the proposed research and the expected completion dates and must have a monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Indicate the proposed phases, measurable target and timeframes for the specific sections and tasks.

1.1.12 Expected outcomes, results and contributions of the research

In this section, the Applicant must demonstrate the contribution that the proposed research will make to the body of knowledge in the particular field of study. Indicate the expected outcomes and what is expected to be achieved, e.g.:

- A new theory
- A prototype
- A new model or method of doing things
- An innovation
- A solution to a practical problem
- A specific solution to practitioners in a particular field

For funding purposes, the evaluation team will require that the expected outcomes be clearly defined, as well as the likelihood that the research will achieve the expected results within the stated timeframe.

1.1.13 References cited

This is a list of the literature referred to in your research proposal. Do not include titles not cited, or that have no relevance to your research problem. You should have read the references you list (or at least the relevant parts). Indicate how they relate to your research.

Distinguish clearly between a list of References cited and a Bibliography. The latter includes all material consulted, including background reading not necessarily cited. Applicants must provide separate lists of References Cited and

Other References. We only accept the **American Psychological Association** (APA) referencing style. Please, consult the University Librarian for guidance.

1.1.14 Annexes/Appendices

(a) Budget proposal and justification

- The proposal must include a detailed budget with justifications that state cost of research implementation (e.g., running and travel costs, allowances of research assistants, etc).
- Make a realistic budget in relation to the activities to be undertaken

(b) Curriculum vitae of Core Researchers

Attach to the proposal Curriculum vitae for the core staff to help evaluators assess the capacity of the proposed research team to undertake the research.

(c) Detailed work plan

References

Annexes

2.0 BUDGET GUIDELINES

2.1 Size of grants

The available resources to cover all projects under this Call for Proposals is **Forty Million Malawi Kwacha (MK40,000,000)**. However, applicants are encouraged to seek additional funds towards the cost of the research project.

2.2 Budget narrative

There must be a narrative budget justification explaining costs to accompany the itemized budget presentation (maximum 2 pages) which explains your budget costs.

2.3 Eligible Costs

The budget must detail all estimated expenses for the project proposal over its duration of implementation. These costs include

- direct research costs (research materials and supplies and other project costs)
- Allowances: Fieldwork expenses that includes transport costs, subsistence allowances using the applicable LUANAR rates.
- Transport costs: The budget must include transport costs to cover the entire duration of the research using the university guidelines.

2.4 Ineligible direct costs

To be eligible under this Call for Proposals, costs must comply with the provisions expressed in these guidelines. As the resources are from Government subventions, the research grants have to be solely used to cover research expenses. As such, the resources provided cannot be used:

- a) To provide scholarships to students (whether full or partial scholarship) that include tuition or allowances or student research expenses;
- b) To compensate academic members of staff for their time during research (salaries) or supervising students' research;
- c) To cover external trips by an academic members of staff to attend conferences. seminars, workshops or training;
- d) To pay for submission of papers to journals or subscription to journals;
- e) To cover fees or expenses of external collaborators or consultants;
- f) To purchase laptops, mobile phones, notepads, vehicles, laboratory equipment, purchase of land, purchase or construction of buildings or other facilities.
- g) To cover recurrent operational costs of the department or faculty or overhead

2.5 Other Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- a) debts and debt service charges (interest);
- b) provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- c) currency exchange losses;
- d) credit to third parties;
- e) taxes, duties and charges.

2.6 Contingency

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 0.5 percent of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the prior written authorization of the Director of Research and Outreach.

2.7 Contributions in-kind

- Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to a beneficiary(ies) or affiliated entity(ies) free of charge by a third party.
- Contributions in kind cannot be treated as co-financing.
- However, if the description of the action as proposed includes contributions in kind, the contributions have to be specified in the proposal.

2.8 Budget

The budget must be realistic and presented in local currency.

3.0 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The following are the requirements for submission of full proposals.

- a) The declaration by the applicant that the proposal has not been funded, submitted or is not been considered by any other institution for funding.
- b) A letter from the head of department of the Principal Investigator declaring that the proposal has been cleared by the department and that member(s) of staff included as researcher have accepted to participate.
- c) A letter from dean of faculty confirming that the proposal has passed through the Faculty Research and Publications Committee.
- d) The proposal must be submitted in both hard and electronic copies to the Director of Research and Outreach. Electronic copies must be sent to the following email address dro@bunda.luanar.mw.
- e) Deadline for submission of the Full Proposals to the Directorate of Research and Outreach is strictly **5th October 2015**.

3.1 Notification of the Award Decision

The applicants will be informed in writing by the Director of Research and Outreach on the decision of the evaluation process.

4.0 EVALUATION PROCEDURE

First, the following will be assessed:

- Compliance with the submission deadline. If the deadline has not been met, the proposal will automatically be rejected.
- The full proposal satisfies all the criteria specified in these guidelines.
- A declaration by the applicant that the proposal has not been submitted to any other organization for funding.
- A clearance letter by the Faculty Dean or Head of Department If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the proposal may be rejected and will not be evaluated further.

4.1 Evaluation criteria

The award criteria help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the scientific merit of the proposals. An independent committee of reviewers will help to select proposals that have scientific merit and with a realistic budget. The ultimate decision to offer the research grant to successful applicants shall be determined by the University Research and Publications Committee.

4.2 Scoring of Research Proposals

The evaluation criteria are divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Table 1: Evaluation Matrix

Category	Assessment factors	Max	Score
Technical & scientific Merit	1= Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results?	5	
	2= Does the proposal provide sufficient technical and scientific background to justify the assumptions made regarding the problem being investigated?	5	
	3= Does the project have a feasible hypothesis/research question and clear objectives?	5	
	4= Is the project logical, i.e. will the specific activities lead to the proposed outcomes and attainment of the objectives?	5	
	5=Are the results or outcomes realistically attainable ensuring a feasible project?	5	
	6= Has the project presented reasonable indicators to measure progress and success?	5	
	7=Does the proposal have a realistic work plan?	5	
	8.= Does the project offer an innovative approach to tackling the	5	

Category	Assessment factors	Max	Score
	problem being investigated or does it add value to existing body of knowledge? What's new in the proposed project?		
	9=Does the proposal identify the risks and constraints and offer adequate explanations how those risks will be overcome?	5	
	10=Does the project appear likely to produce outputs (knowledge, innovations & technologies) with potential for up-scaling?	5	
	Total	50	
		Max	Score
Competence/ Capacity	1= Do members of the research have sufficient experience in research related to the project being proposed as well as in project management?	5	
	2.=Does the team demonstrate an effective team approach to the project and promote collaboration? Is the level of involvement and participation in the project by Team members satisfactory?	5	
	3= Does the project provide space for inter-departmental or inter-disciplinary or inter-faculty collaboration to enhance institutional capacity	5	
	4=Shall the project involve the beneficiaries in design and implementation and promote participation in general and address gender issues and those of beneficiaries?	5	
	5=Has the project considered all possible ethical issues related to the design and implementation of the project?	5	
	Total	25	
		Max	Score
Financial	1=Is the budget realistic to achieve the outcomes and objectives identified? Do the proposed expenditures match with the outputs to be generated? Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? (cost effectiveness)	5	
	2=To what extent do the resources go directly to the research activities other than other services?	5	
	3=Is the project worth investing in? Does it present value for money?	5	
	Total	15	
		Max	Score
Monitoring & Evaluation	1=Does the project include the M&E, feasibility and research dissemination framework/plan?	5	
	2= Does the proposal contain objectively verifiable indicators for the outcome of the research? Is any evaluation planned?	5	
	Total	10	
Grand Total		100	

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score and within the limits of the funds available. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria to be used if more funds should become available.

5.0 CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

- 5.1 A letter from the Principal Investigator (s) declaring that the proposal has not been funded, submitted or is not been considered by any other institution for funding.
- 5.2 A letter from the Chair of Faculty Research and Publications Committee that the proposal meets the minimum quality standards and can be considered for further external review.
- 5.2 A letter from the Head(s) of department confirming that the proposal has been cleared by the department and that member(s) of staff included as researcher have accepted to participate.
- 5.3 Documented evidence of institutional approval of the project involving human subjects or animals is planned. An approval letter is required from the LUANAR Research Ethics Committee that the proposed project has incorporated remedies for all ethical considerations.

False declarations may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the University Disciplinary Procedures as contained in the University Conditions of Service.

6.0 CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWERS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

This checklist incorporates the items used for evaluation of full research proposals.

6.1 Problem identification

- 6.1.1 Is the problem/line of enquiry clearly defined?
- 6.1.2 Is the basic research problem well formulated, or is it poorly and vaguely structured?
- 6.1.3 Is it briefly and concisely stated?
- 6.1.4 Does the researcher indulge in jargon which obscures rather than explains what the research problem is?

6.2 Background to the research problem

- 6.2.1 Has there been an adequate description of the background to the problem either under a separate heading or as part of the literature?
- 6.2.2 Has the area of concern regarding the problem been identified, i.e., has the need that exists to research the problem been clarified?

6.3. Objectives

- 6.3.1 Have the objectives been stated clearly?
- 6.3.2 Are the research objectives, questions and hypothesis been clearly formulated?

6.4. Significance

- 6.4.1 To what extent will the research make an original and creative contribution to knowledge or innovation?
- 6.4.2 To what extent will the research analyze and diagnose a particular problem, set it out logically, arrive at conclusions and make proposals for the solution of the problem?
- 6.4.3 Why is it important to undertake this research? Whom will it benefit or to whom will it be important?
- 6.4.4 Is the proposed research likely to promote further investigation within and/or across disciplines and fields?
- 6.4.5 Has the expected outcome (or outcomes) of the research been clearly identified?

6.5. Literature review

- 6.5.1 Is there clear evidence of a thorough review of the literature?
- 6.5.2 Is there a theoretical engagement with the relevant literature?
- 6.5.3 Does the literature review provide an adequate theoretical framework for the study?
- 6.5.4 Has the Applicant taken the review of the literature as a obligatory task with no contribution to or advancement of the intellectual debate?
- 6.5.5 Has appropriate literature been examined in order to provide the background and rationale to the problem and its formulation?
- 6.5.6 Have relevant sources been used to identify the problem?
- 6.5.7 Does the literature review correspond with the aims and objectives of the research?
- 6.5.8 Are the cited references acceptable?
- 6.5.9 Are textual references and bibliographic citation correct?

6.6. Conceptual framework

- 6.6.1 To what extent are the conceptual framework and theoretical assumptions clearly stated?
- 6.6.2 Has the study been clearly delineated under a separate heading or sub-heading, i.e., have the boundaries of the research been stated?
- 6.6.3 Has a suitable hypothesis (or hypotheses) been formulated, or has a suitable research question (or research questions) been stated?

6.7. Research design

- 6.7.1 Is the research design well-structured and outlined, or is it poorly articulated?
- 6.7.2 Has the research methodology been articulated clearly?
- 6.7.3 Is there a clear correspondence between the stated aims of the research and the chosen methodology?
- 6.7.4 Are the methodologies described in details pointing to the activities to be performed?
- 6.7.5 Are the proposed methods suitable in terms of relevance and appropriateness to the proposed research, or have they been tested for their validity before use?
- 6.7.6 Have the sampling methodology and data collection been adequately clarified?
- 6.7.7 Is the analysis appropriate to the aims of the research?

6.8. Feasibility

- 6.8.1 Is the problem researchable and is it feasible? Do the preliminary data and available resources support its feasibility?
- 6.8.2 Do the core research staff have the experience and expertise necessary for the accomplishment of the research?
- 6.8.3 Does the research proposal involve other disciplines or faculties?

6.9. Other general comments

- 6.9.1 Is the proposal well-structured or poorly compiled? If the latter, what should be done to make it a well-structured proposal?

6.10. Language

- 6.10.1 Has the research proposal been proofread and edited?