

# Guidelines for Establishment and Funding of Research Groups at KFUPM

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# A. Preamble

## 1. Introduction

In order to attain and maintain excellence and leadership in research areas of national importance and emerging fields of knowledge, the research efforts and capabilities of KFUPM researchers need to be nurtured, enhanced, focused and properly directed. Achieving focus that will lead to excellence is the main scope of this new research funding scheme. This funding scheme is devised to encourage building teams of researchers that will focus on a specific field of knowledge. The funds can be utilized for compensating faculty, and support staff, for attracting graduate students and post-doctoral fellows (subject to current University hiring regulation and rules) and for establishing and developing research capabilities. In addition, the funds can be utilized for building research collaboration, attending conferences, inviting experts, and writing books and manuscripts.

Research is anticipated to be directed to a particular priority area by establishing a focused research group composed of a team of specialized researchers with established track records that will conduct research in the priority area and is anticipated to eventually achieve excellence and global leadership.

## 2. Definition

A research group working on a priority research area consists of a structured research team hosted by a department or a group of departments and made up of expert faculty, researchers, Post-Doc, graduate students and technicians. The group must satisfy the following conditions:

1. The group comprises of four or more faculty members/researchers from KFUPM,
2. The group members do research effectively in clearly defined areas of specialization,
3. The group works under the direction of a coordinator from KFUPM (hereinafter called "director", if transformed to a Center).
4. The group has an executive team of 3 to 4 members in the area of the group.

## 3. Operation

### 3.1. Coordinator

The Coordinator is a reputed full or associate professor with a well-established track record of quality and leadership in the research field of the group. The coordinator will be the grant contact with the Deanship of Scientific Research (DSR) and has overall responsibility for coordinating all research and administrative activities of the research group, including:

1. Setting directions and developing plans for the group research in consultation with group members.
2. Facilitating and initiating collaborative research among group members.
3. Assisting, guiding, and advising junior group members.
4. Promoting innovation, creativity, and excellence within the group.
5. Reporting and coordinating progress of activities to the DSR

### 3.2. Executive Committee

The Research group should have an established executive committee of 3 to 4 members including the coordinator as the chair. Functions of the executive committee include:

1. Holding regular monthly or at least once in two months meetings.
2. Reviewing and endorsing the research proposals submitted by members before forwarding to DSR
3. Reviewing the Group strategic plan and its strengths towards achieving its objectives and reporting to DSR annually
4. Approving new members in the area of group and suspending inactive members (This needs to be done in coordination with DSR as and when action is taken)

## 4. Objectives

The research group members should commit to:

1. Establish Excellence and carry out fundamental, applied and/or interdisciplinary research of high quality in key cluster areas of relevance to KFUPM and of importance to the Country and emerging fields of knowledge and promote research of high international impact.

2. Build research capacity and provide high quality training and a conducive research environment for promising young faculty, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students.
3. Provide a high quality research environment for the development and enhancement of graduate programs as well as the enhancement of undergraduate teaching at KFUPM.
4. Develop links and collaboration with renowned National and international research groups and attract leading researchers.

## **B. Criteria**

1. All members of the group should be PhD holders
2. To foster collaboration among faculty members and to achieve the required depth in the area of the group, a research group must have at least three members with experience in the field of the group. Evidence of experience can be demonstrated by:
  - Publications in the field of research of the group
  - Completed or ongoing funded research projects in the area of the group
  - PhD/MS theses supervised that are related to the area of the group
  - Publications and patents produced from supervised PhD/MS theses
  - Impact and Citations of research output
  - Memberships on editorial boards of professional journals and periodicals
  - Organization of conferences/symposia/workshops (within or outside KFUPM)
  - Participations in internationally renowned conferences/symposia/workshops in the area of the group
3. To help maintain focus and eventually achieve excellence in the area of the group, a faculty member/researcher cannot be a member of more than two research groups

## **C. Activities of a Research Group**

Expected contributions and activities of a research group include:

1. Developing specialized graduate courses in the field of the group
2. Publishing a number of jointly authored research papers and patents in high quality ISI journals
3. Conducting or participating in funded research projects in the area of the group
4. Building, equipping, maintaining and operating research facilities whenever applicable

5. Writing/editing/translating research books in the field
6. Organizing lecture series by members and invited speakers
7. Participating in teaching and supervising graduate students
8. Enhancing undergraduate education
9. Holding regular seminars/meetings in the area of the group
10. Hosting visits by distinguished scholars in the area
11. Organizing workshops, symposia and conferences at and/or outside KFUPM
12. Recommending hiring promising researchers in the field
13. Utilizing sabbatical leaves, summer travel programs and international scholarship programs to build links with leading international experts and research centers in the area of the group
14. Representing KFUPM in international events, workshops and conferences in the field
15. Establishing a network with leading research centers in the field through exchanging visits, joint supervision of graduate students, joint organization of events and joint research projects
16. Building and maintaining an efficient website that lists information about the group members, activities and accomplishments.

## **D. Evaluation and Renewal**

The group coordinator submits a self-evaluation report periodically to the DSR. The report should:

1. Provide a detailed account of group achievements
2. Indicate modifications, if any, in group coordination and directions for the next two years.

If renewal is requested by the group coordinator, the DSR will evaluate the progress report and make a decision for renewal or cessation of the support of the research group. The decision will be mainly based on the performance of the group and the resulting outcomes.

### **D.1. Evaluation of the Research Group**

1. Each group coordinator should submit at least once in three months executive committee meeting summaries to DSR and highlight its achievements and challenges.
2. Submit a brief midterm report (every 6 months) on the progress of the group, its ongoing projects, achievements, and problems encountered.
3. Submit a detailed assessment report annually.

## **D.2. Assessment Process**

In addition to submission of a detailed annual report, each Group Coordinator is requested to make a short presentation to a jury panel comprising of member from the Research Committee and Scientific Research Council. Each presentation is required to be focused on the following four points:

1. What are the current and past activities of the group?
2. What are the scholarly achievements and contributions made by the Research Group during the established period from funds allotted for its research projects?
3. Why should the University continue to provide funding for the Research Group?
4. How do you see this group in the upcoming 5 years and what should the university expect from it?

## **E. Benefits**

Based on the evaluation report as well as the evaluation of the performance of the individual group members, the DSR provides the following support:

### **E.1. Financial Compensation**

1. Twice the regular compensation for research projects by DSR
2. One month summer assignment for eligible members as approved for each project proposal in the group research program.

### **E.2. Other benefits:**

1. Financial Allowance for establishing research facilities for the group
2. Recommending the recruitment of new faculty members in the area of specialization of the group.
3. The possibility for recruiting Post-Doctoral Fellows (subject to the current University rules and regulations) in the group area of specialization.
4. Financial Allowance for exchange of scientific visits as approved for proposals of the group research program.
5. Allowance for seed money. The approval and amount will be determined based on need and provided justifications.

6. Flexibility in managing up to 15% of the fund by the coordinator for spending on research related expenses other than manpower compensation as approved in the group research program.

## **F. Procedure for Establishing a Research Group**

1. Any group of faculty members and researchers, led by a coordinator, can initiate a request for the establishment of a research group. The involvement of junior faculty as members and graduate students whenever possible is highly encouraged.
2. The group must have a designated coordinator and an executive team of 3-4 members in the area of the group.
3. The coordinator submits to the DSR a group establishment proposal including the items discussed in Appendix A.
4. Upon receiving the application file, the DSR reviews the proposal to ascertain fulfillment of all requirements for establishing the Group.
5. Approval for the establishment and funding of a research group will be based on merit. Proposals for research groups which do not qualify as a research group but have all the ingredients and potentials for success could be approved as Research Group In-Development with less funding and less incentives than a full research group. This will be a transitional phase for promotion to a full research group based on a two-year performance assessment. Decision on such cases will be based on proposals review results and will be on a case-by-case basis.

## **G. Funding Schemes**

All major research funding proposals will be accepted by the Deanship of Research only through research groups with all benefits outlined in this guideline. This applies to those groups which prove to be full research group.

## H. APPENDIX – A

### RESEARCH GROUP ESTABLISHMENT PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

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