



MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH POLICY

**APPROVED BY THE 74th MEETING OF UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
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Abbreviations

DRGT: Directorate of Research and Graduate Training

ICT: Information Communication Technology

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

MUST: Mbarara University of Science and Technology

MGO: MUST Grants Office

MUST REC: MUST Research Ethics Committee

MUST Vision

To be a centre of academic and professional excellence in Science and Technology.

MUST Mission

To provide quality and relevant education at national and international level with particular emphasis on Science and Technology and its application to community development.

Motto

Succeed We Must

Shared values

- Excellence
- Innovativeness
- Team work
- Professionalism
- Internationalization
- Respect for Diversity

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) expressly asserts the freedom of Ugandans to express themselves. Article 29(1b) states that “every person shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief which shall include academic freedom in institutions of learning.” Therefore, the freedom to conduct research is recognized in government pronouncements as well as the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995.

The Universities and Other Institutions Act 2001 (as amended in 2003 and 2006), states that the Objects and Functions of a public university are defined in Article 24. Specifically, the Objects and Functions of a public university 24(1) shall be those set out in the instrument establishing the University; 24(2a) provision of higher education, promotion of research and advancement of learning; and 24(2b) dissemination of knowledge and giving opportunity of acquiring higher education to all persons including those with disabilities wishing to do so regardless of race, political opinion, color, creed or sex.

In her Strategic Plan (2016/17 – 2025/26), Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) highlighted the need for enhancing research within the “Second Thematic Area of Research and Innovation.” Here the goal is “to enhance the Quality and Quantity of Research and Innovation Output” with the following objectives: i) to create an enabling environment and policy framework that promotes research and innovation; ii) to enhance funding for research and innovations; and iii) to promote research uptake.

1.2 MUST Statement of Commitment

The vision and mission of MUST demonstrate the importance attached to research. MUST finds herself with the inherent role of providing leadership in the domain of higher education and research. This role however, has to be fulfilled in the context of changing paradigms, characterized by an ever shrinking resource base due to government competing needs as well as the continuing global economic crisis. Against this background, MUST commits herself to living up the highest ideals of good research governance, to be socially responsive, and to promoting and pursuing excellence in training, innovation and research. This research policy shall:

- i. Espouse the virtues of truth, integrity, honesty, tolerance, professionalism, and teamwork.
- ii. Nurture a culture of research and innovation at MUST.
- iii. Uphold the ethics and etiquette of teaching, learning and research.

- iv. Promote and defend the freedom of thought and academic enquiry.
- v. Ensure openness and transparency in all its dealings and operations.
- vi. Respect the beliefs and values of others.
- vii. Respect and protect the environment.
- viii. Have the courage to initiate and adapt to change.

1.3 Purpose of the Research Policy

This policy strengthens the research capacity and output; and streamlines the conduct and management of research as well as institutionalizing research uptake processes at MUST. It will ably MUST to contribute towards the development of Uganda and the world. It provides a guiding framework to facilitate research-related policies development and review, planning and implementation of research activities within the university. Also, it will ensure that all research activities have a clear purpose related to MUST mission and vision, and that resources mobilized for research activities are directed towards the fulfillment of institutional goals. These resources include policy framework and supportive infrastructure, human resources, sound knowledge and information, physical infrastructure, equipment, services and finances.

This policy provides the minimum standards for implementation of research and related activities that encourage effective communication, efficient, ethical and honest research conduct and availability of essential human and material resources. It ensures that research activities underpin MUST educational activities, thus facilitating the development of sufficient numbers of highly-skilled human capital for national development.

1.4 Strategic Objectives

- i. To create an enabling, harmonious, transparent and efficient environment for research and innovations,
- ii. To strengthen research management and coordination,
- iii. To improve research and publications culture,
- iv. To improve funding for research and innovations and
- v. To improve gender responsiveness of MUST through research and innovations.

1.5 Scope

MUST shall facilitate, host and conduct research in disciplines where latest developments promise to offer new knowledge or address problems constraining development initiatives in Uganda and in the region. In this policy, capacity building shall be a major goal of all research activities. The research scope shall take care of all disciplines offered at MUST broadly including cultural, social, health, agriculture,

environment, education, technology, industry, oil and gas. These should capture the major priority areas within the university research framework as well as national, regional and global agenda. The sharing of information through conferences, seminars, workshops, publications and other modes of international exposures shall be facilitated.

2.0 KEY POLICY AREAS

2.1 Research Governance Structure

The research governance structure takes into account the existing university structures and how they interface with research activities. Research governance is grounded upon three pillars: Directorate of Research and Graduate Training (DRGT), direct research activities and support services. DRGT shall provide support to pre-award activities (grants sourcing, etc) and post-award grants management, monitoring and evaluation. Direct research activities shall include management of human resource and the products of research. Lastly, the relevant university units shall provide the support services.

2.2 Creating an enabling environment

MUST recognizes the central role research plays in its mandate as an institution of higher learning in Uganda. The generation of new knowledge through research directly impacts on curriculum development and teaching. In order to continue to play the key function of research, MUST commits herself to establishing, maintaining, and protecting an enabling research environment that promotes innovation, production, domestication and stimulating exchange of ideas within the university community and with the outside world. Such an enabling environment shall be created through the following strategies:

- 2.2.1 Create centers of excellence that are adequately equipped and maintained for use by all interested parties in the University in a sustainable manner. The University shall, therefore:
- i. Develop and update guidelines for setting up centers of excellence.
 - ii. Encourage and support the establishment and maintaining of state-of-the-art laboratories with user guidelines for researchers.
 - iii. Encourage the formation of multidisciplinary research teams.
 - iv. Ensure that capacity to maintain the state of the art equipment is developed e.g. through enhanced training of technical staff and users.
 - v. Require research equipment and other resources acquired during the life of any research project to revert to the University at termination of the project.
 - vi. Guidelines for use of equipment (including bench fees) and disposal of such resources shall be developed.

2.2.2 Support staff access internet and other Information Communication Technology (ICT) services. MUST shall:

- i. Provide internet and other ICT facilities at every academic/research unit for purposes of knowledge creation and dissemination.
- ii. Provide access to e-resources and other ICT related common services/software for the purposes of data management and analysis.

2.2.3 Support researchers to attend and present papers/posters at national and international conferences. This shall be achieved through:

- i. Provision for travel support in the units' budgets to facilitate staff attendance at conferences.
- ii. Inclusion of a budget line for attendance at conferences in the research projects.
- iii. A requirement for staff to be supported to have obtained invitations to present papers/posters or to chair sessions at research meetings.
- iv. Support shall be in part or total depending on availability of funds.

2.2.4 MUST shall periodically generate a research agenda.

- i. Faculties/institutes shall formulate research priorities that will feed into the university research agenda.
- ii. The priorities identified shall reflect national research objectives and relevant international trends.
- iii. The research agenda shall promote both basic and applied research.
- iv. The review of the research agenda shall be pegged to the review of the University Strategic Plan.

2.2.5 Facilitate national, regional and international collaboration and global networking.

To this end, the university shall:

- i. Enter into memorandum of understanding (MoU) with leading research and higher education institutions.
- ii. Create a database of MoUs.
- iii. Review existing MoUs (where necessary).
- iv. Operationalize the standard operating procedures for collaboration.

2.2.6 Provide research support services including management information systems and library resources that facilitate access to current literature and databases.

Therefore,

- i. MUST shall continue to subscribe to relevant databases providing information to researchers.
- ii. DRGT shall create and maintain research and innovations database accessible to the university community and the general public.

2.2.7 Undergraduate and Postgraduate Research

MUST undertakes to train and create sufficient interest in research among students both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. DRGT and Faculties shall create an enabling environment through appropriate provisions in approved curricula and regulations. DRGT shall take the lead in monitoring the progress and facilitating a research environment which supports postgraduate students to complete their studies within the stipulated period.

2.2.8 Environmental Health and safety

Recognizing that the environment provides an important link in our research output, MUST has an obligation to protect and preserve the environment – the biological, physical and social environment. In all its operations in general as well as individual affiliates, MUST shall enforce the protection and preservation of the biological, physical and social environment. The guiding principle shall all the time be continuous improvement of the environment in its totality.

2.3 Strengthen Research Management and Coordination

The policy recognizes that research activities carried out through various academic and research units at MUST have to be managed and coordinated properly for the benefit of the entire university in a fair and transparent manner. This will be achieved through the following strategies:

2.3.1 Support staff to continually update their skills in research management.

This shall be achieved through:

- i. Conducting regular training workshops/seminars at both unit and center level in grant proposal writing, financial management, scholarly writing and dissemination.
- ii. Developing, operationalizing and updating research management tools (graduate handbook, grants management manual, and other guidelines).
- iii. Support staff to attend skills enhancement courses locally and internationally.

2.3.2 Provide regulations for sourcing services related to research.

Operationalize the Grants Management Manual for guidance in engaging persons employed using research funds (project coordinators, research assistants, data managers, etc).

2.3.3 Promote a mentoring and apprenticeship culture in research.

- i. Require as part of eligibility criteria for research support senior staff to work with junior staff and graduate students on research projects for mentoring and supervision.
- ii. Support senior academic staff to work with junior staff to produce joint publications.
- iii. Mainstream gender and actively involve women in research activities.
- iv. Encourage academic units to establish Professorial Research Chairs.

2.3.4 Provide guidelines for supervisors and supervisees during the research process to ensure harmony, quality and timely completion.

- i. Operationalize and periodically review the graduate students supervision guidelines.
- ii. Disseminate widely the postgraduate handbook.

2.3.5 Strengthen the research management and coordination function at institutional and unit levels.

- i. DRGT shall develop a governance structure for research and coordination.
 - a) There shall be a functional Faculty Research Committee at each Faculty.
 - b) Administrative responsibilities regarding research management at Faculty level shall be specified.
- ii. Provide tools for internal procedures for approval, control, monitoring and coordination of research and innovations.

2.3.6 DRGT as secretariat shall guide the research and innovation function of the University.

- i. Initiate, develop, implement and review periodically the policy on research and innovations.
- ii. Develop the policy on sourcing and administration of research funds.
- iii. Submit to Senate reports on its activities annually.
- iv. There shall be technical sub-committees to assist the BRGT in implementing its mandate. These shall include: Ethics Committee, Intellectual Property Management Committee, etc.

2.4 Improve Research and Publications Culture

In order for the university to attain and maintain a leading position in research output, the policy recognizes that the research and publication culture must be enhanced. This shall be realized through measures described below:

2.4.1 Provide incentives /reward for research

Staff shall spend at least 25% of their time on research and dissemination. To this end, MUST shall:

- i. Recognize and reward staff for outstanding performance in research and innovations.
- ii. Develop, operationalize and review periodically guidelines on how to identify and reward staff for outstanding research and innovation.

2.4.2 Publication as requirement for academic staff and graduate students

- i. Ensure maintenance of satisfactory staff to student ratios in line with university establishment policy so that staff have adequate time to publish.
- ii. Require staff at levels of lecturer and above (or equivalent) to publish at least one paper in a peer reviewed journal yearly.
- iii. Require doctoral students during the course of study period to publish at least two papers in a peer reviewed journal before they graduate.
- iv. Require masters students to publish at least one paper before graduation.
- v. Operationalize and update a system for tracking staff research and outputs.
- vi. Require staff to publish research findings in form of policy briefs for use by policy makers.

2.4.3 Provide and support platforms for dissemination of research outputs

- i. Create platforms for staff and students to disseminate research outputs such as seminars (including annual dissemination conference) and locally hosted journals, newsletters and bulletins (both hardcopy and electronic).
- ii. Support units to organize regular conferences.
- iii. Support regular public presentations and debates on topical areas of national or international concern.
- iv. The university shall require doctoral students to publish their findings in any of the following forms:
 - a. theses/dissertations as either monographs
 - b. theses/dissertations with chapters as standalone papers
 - c. theses/dissertations as a compilation of papers either already published or accepted for publication
- v. All research reports shall be deposited with the University Library and elsewhere if necessary

2.4.4 Promote Ethical Conduct of Research

MUST shall ensure that researchers working within or associated with the university abide to the established international ethical standards. Through MUST Research Ethics Committee (MUST REC), guidelines on ethical research practices shall be reviewed from time to time as dictated by advances in knowledge. MUST shall operationalize the Faculty Research Committees as well as strengthening MUST REC to oversee the ethical conduct of research.

2.5 Objectivity in research

Fair and honest reporting is the hallmark of scientific endeavours. Researchers are expected to: maintain the highest degree of intellectual honesty in the design, implementation, data collection and analysis, reporting of findings and in acknowledgement of significant direct and indirect contributions made by colleagues and collaborators. Again they are expected to be honest in reporting conflict of interest that might exist in relation to the specific works they are carrying out as well as any real or potential conflicts of interest to the university.

2.6 Improve funding for research and innovations

The policy realizes the importance of securing sufficient funds for staff members to conduct meaningful research, to attend national and international meetings, and to contribute to the research income of the university. It is envisaged that the strategies highlighted below shall improve funding for research and innovations. To this end, MUST shall:

- 2.6.1 Commit at least 3% of the internally generated funds to research and innovations annually.
- 2.6.2 Require all research projects to contribute upto 15% of the research costs as institutional overheads/indirect costs. This shall be reviewed from time to time.
- 2.6.3 Continue to solicit research funds from national and international organizations, both public and private. Solicitation of funding shall be encouraged and facilitated at individual, departmental or faculty levels.
- 2.6.4 Engage the private sector to contribute towards research and innovations through:
 - i. Funding/promoting joint research, technology innovation and transfer;
 - ii. Encouraging private sector utilization of MUST intellectual resources;
 - iii. Promoting private sector demand driven skills; and
 - iv. Promoting private sector participation in University activities.
- 2.6.5 Provide general information including databases on possible sources and modes of research funding on a regular basis.
- 2.6.6 MUST shall subscribe to databases that provide information on funding opportunities.

2.7 Improve gender-responsiveness through research and innovations

- 2.7.1 Provide opportunities for staff and students to train in gender focused research methodology.
- 2.7.2 Integrate gender in research proposals.
- 2.7.3 Encourage involvement of women in research teams.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION

This policy shall:

- i. be implemented and reviewed periodically by DRGT and Faculties.
- ii. be implemented or supplemented in any way consistent with its terms and those of other MUST policies.
- iii. not apply to on-going research projects and written agreements between MUST and/or any external organization or individual, entered into prior to the date on which this Policy is adopted by the University Council.
- iv. if an existing written agreement is renewed, revised, or amended after the date on which this Policy is adopted by the University Council, reasonable attempts shall be made to conform such agreement with the requirements of this Policy as of the date on which it is renewed, revised, or amended.
- v. after adoption MUST Senate shall be responsible for drawing out implementation guidelines or procedures from time to time.

4.0 NOTIFICATION

DRGT shall inform all persons subject to this policy of its terms after its adoption and at regular intervals thereafter.