



HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR THEMATIC RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM

Thematic
Research
Grants

1. Introduction

Higher education sector of Pakistan has been playing an important role in improving the quality of teaching and developing research culture through innovative ways. Realizing the need of ensuring the concept of knowledge economy in true sense it initiated different incentivized programs in both the public and private sector universities/institutions to motivate and encourage the potential researchers in almost all disciplines. However, besides its focus on promoting research culture in sciences it also concentrated on promoting research culture in social sciences.

It, hence, intends to encourage the creative and talented faculty members to probe into those areas (see the different thematic areas in attachment) that check the growth, development and progress of Pakistan. Such encouragement not only helps in addressing the key issues paralyzing the status of Pakistan but also unearthing those possible case studies and details which can be translated into national policies and goals achievements. Furthermore, thematic research programme in social sciences aims to discourage the on-going brain drain and utilizing the innovative thinking of researchers. The following are the SOPs of the Thematic Grants Program.

2. Objectives

TGRP intends to:

- a) Address all such issues that discourage the pace of Pakistan in encountering the developed world;
- b) Identify all those possible avenues which can ensure the concept of innovation and commercialization of research output;
- c) Showcase material and other details or, in other words, profile of Pakistan vis-à-vis other countries, if required, for understanding of the readers, academics, policy makers as well as for developing holistic development strategies;
- d) Encourage diversity based researches to help develop grounded and feasible understanding of the issues through diverse lenses.
- e) Ensure continuity, implementation, and institutionalization of previous research done under Thematic Research Grant Program.

f) Converting the earlier research into policies, programs, interventions, electronic and training materials, degree programs, diploma courses, and publications, for wider dissemination and application.

3. Amount and Budget Estimates:

Maximum funding would be up to Rs.10.0 million for each research project. The proposed budget will be submitted on a separate sheet in the approved format provided along with the Application Form. If more than one institute is involved, the budget must clearly state the cash/kind inputs by and expenses for each institute in respect of all cost-heads.

PI shall provide budget details along with justifications for each budget head as prescribed in the Application Form. The contingencies shall not exceed 10% of the total project budget. No additional budget shall be provided in case of any change in circumstances.

4. Duration:

Grants will be awarded for one year only to the applicants/proposals fulfilling the HEC Thematic Research Grants Criteria provided with Application Form and available at www.hec.gov.pk/site/thematic.

In case of adverse circumstances, the application of P.I. for extension in project period may be considered on case to case basis.

If the project proposal is funded, the institution will be responsible for the administration of the grant. No funds will be paid directly to the individuals.

5. Eligibility Criteria

- a. Faculty members (permanent/full time) of social sciences, business education, art/design and humanities, behavioral sciences, and such other disciplines which are not covered in the science faculties, having at least PhD degree or equivalent (in case of principal investigator) or M.S./M.Phil. Or equivalent (in case of co-principal investigator(s)) of public sector universities or eligible private sector universities (list is available at HEC web site) are eligible to apply for this research grant.
- b. Faculty members retiring in the next two years will not be entitled to receive research project grant.
- c. The faculty members on study leave during the fiscal year will not be entitled for research project grant.
- d. PI must not have a history of un-successful, un-adjusted and un-accounted for previous HEC funded project.
- e. Proposal must include a cover sheet, abstract, brief survey of literature, bibliography, end user Beneficiaries, work plan and other details as per prescribed Application Form and CVs of the research team.
- f. Proposals must be submitted with the approval of the Vice Chancellor/Rector/Director of university/DAI.

g. Completed proposals reach the HEC office on or before the deadline. Late submissions shall not be considered.

6. Other guidelines

a. An applicant cannot submit more than one project in a year.

b. Grants cannot be used for buying vehicles, huge hardware and other major acquisitions of a capital nature except minor equipment [laptop/desktop/3-in-one copier etc.]/accessories justified in proposal.

c. Utilization of the research project grant would be in line with budget proposal and no re-appropriation will be allowed.

d. PI/Co-PI shall receive remuneration in Lump sum once in a project period from the 2nd installment.

e. Research Associates/Research Fellows/ Post-doctoral fellows shall be allowed to assist in the project if justified in the proposal.

f. Inter-universities/institutes/DAI's collaborative proposals involving less-developed institutions are encouraged.

g. No foreign trip / training is allowed under awarded grant.

h. The PI can appoint the team members as per approved project budget heads as and when needed as per proposed strategy and timeline.

i. The PI shall be required to submit the following deliverables during course of the project;

— Fund Utilization duly audited by the University Auditor and Progress Report – 1 in the mid of the project

— Fund Utilization duly audited by the University Auditor and Progress Report – 2 at the end of the project

— Report should be submitted both in hard and soft form.

— Project-specific other deliverables as committed in the proposal.

— Presentation of the finding in HEC National Symposium organized for the purpose.

— 100 copies of Financial Academic research report printed by universities/DAIs or publisher of National/International repute for the end users / stakeholders. The published report shall contains outcome of the Research, benefit for end users are recommendation for adaptation/implementation for beneficiaries.

Upon receipt of the above documents, the HEC shall issue an NOC /certificate of project completion to the PI and the Institution.

7. Proposal Review Process

The proposals received shall be processed as under;

Initial Screening: Proposals submitted by PI's shall go through first scrutiny by the HEC Focal Person's Staff. At this stage, based on the documents/details provided, eligible proposals shall be short-listed.

Review by Committee: The short-listed proposals will be evaluated by a Research Project Review Committee appointed by HEC and its decision will be communicated to the Principal Investigator within three weeks of submission.

Selection of reviewers: A panel of reviewers shall be selected by HEC from Social Sciences, Business Education, Art and Humanities experts in the relevant field. The applicants (PI&CO-PI) will not be a part of committee.

Project review criteria: The review of project shall be undertaken against the approved criteria. For the proposals which are otherwise acceptable, the reviewers shall provide a brief qualitative report containing guidelines/comments for any further refinements in the accepted project methodology, budget or implementation plan.

8. Final Approval Proposals

All the shortlisted proposals along with reviewers’ report would be presented to competent authority of HEC for grant approval of the projects for funding and award letter will be issued by Academic Division

9. Timelines:

To ensure the smooth running of the thematic Grants Program the following schedule shall be followed;

Proposal submission	Four weeks after publishing of advertisement
Announcement of successful proposals	Eight weeks after submission of proposals
Expected release of grants	Three weeks after announcement of successful proposals
First Progress/ Utilization Reports	The PI shall submit mid-term progress report containing the project progress and duly audited funds utilization after 6 months of starting date of the project
Second Progress OR Midterm Review	The HEC authorized team may visit the project on site between 5 th to 8 th month to see the progress, methods, inputs and outputs of the project.
Final Report	The PI shall submit FIVE sets of Final Report to HEC and circulate 95 copies to relevant stakeholders containing the complete progress and funds utilization at the end of the project

10. Monitoring of the projects

Keeping in view the number of funded projects and administrative convenience, as many monitoring Teams shall be appointed by HEC as appropriate. The HEC authorized teams may visit the project on site between 5th to 8th month of start of the project to see the progress, methods, inputs and outputs of the project.

The monitoring team shall submit its evaluation report on the prescribed Performa/score card. To ensure that monitoring team visits timely, the HEC authorized Focal Person shall be responsible to facilitate the teams in travelling and logistics etc.

11. Change of PI/Co-PI

If the PI leaves the Institution, then Co-PI would take the lead of the project if he is in the same institution. In case there is no Co-PI or Co-PI also leaves the institution, then VC/Rector of university/ Director of DAI shall appoint a PI from amongst the project team or as per laid down parameters /procedure of HEC.

In case both PI and Co-PI move to the same institution and jointly apply for transfer of funds to their new institution, HEC shall have no objection in such cases, subject to the adjustment of funds released to previous institution and issuance of NOC about no liabilities against PI and Co-PI with regard to the specific project.

12. Submission of research proposal:

HEC shall provide all necessary Details of the program and documents [Application Form, Themes/Sub-themes, Budget Template etc.] on the HEC website.

Four copies of the online application form duly signed and stamped by Head of Institution should be submitted/ sent by registered mail/courier service in the name of Director (ACAD), Higher Education Commission, H-8, Islamabad along with email submission at: (tshah@hec.gov.pk).

13. Legal Deed

Upon acceptance of the research proposal, the PI shall submit a Legal Deed endorsed by the respective VC/Director in order to receive the grant.

14. Right of HEC

In case of the Non-Compliance of the Deed by the grantee of the TRGP/ Non-fulfillment of the procedure the HEC shall reserve the right to cancel the Deed forthwith. Moreover, in case of non-observance of the time duration of research work (Including the approved period of the extension) the HEC shall not grant TRGP to the same University/DAI, again/ for the next time.

Dr. Muhammad Tahir Ali Shah

Director [Academics]/Focal Person Social Sciences
Higher Education Commission, H-9, Islamabad
Phone: 051-90402104, 90402127 Fax: 051-90402102
Email: tshah@hec.gov.pk
URL: www.hec.gov.pk/site/thematic