



Office of Vice-president for the Research Affairs

Haramaya University Research Policy

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1. Preface

Growth and development requires transformation of all sectors of a nation. Demand-driven research plays a key role in this transformation. With this regard, Haramaya University (HU) has made great contribution in the generation and dissemination of knowledge and technologies in Ethiopia. However, in order to address the growing demands for new technologies and innovations in the country, the University should engage in more rigorous and demand-driven research. Though it has been engaged in research activities since its establishment as college of agriculture, the university does not have comprehensive policy to direct its research undertakings. Thus, this policy document is developed to ensure the relevance, quality and impact of research activities carried out in the University. In the process of developing this research policy, challenges that the University encountered to realize its research vision and mission were assessed. Besides, experiences of different national and international higher learning institutions were consulted.

In this research policy, critical elements for successful research undertakings such as human resource, finance, infrastructure, research process management, research ethics, and dissemination of research outputs and assessment of their impacts have been addressed. This policy, therefore, provides a framework towards ensuring transparency and accountability in all research endeavors of the University. Moreover, it serves as a foundation for the development of any other guidelines and working documents pertaining to research undertakings in the university. It is hoped that researchers will find the document useful and abide by it for the realization and accomplishment of the research vision and mission of our University.

2. Introduction

Transmission of knowledge, conducting scholarly inquiry and providing community services are a university's central and complementary functions. Cognizant of this fact, Haramaya University has set forth its research priorities under six thematic areas (*HU Research Thematic Areas*, 2014) in line with various national policies. As stated in *Higher Education Proclamation 650/2009*, the focus of research in higher learning institutions is promoting the relevance and quality of education and addressing the country's development issues. In line with this, HU's *Senate Legislation* stipulates that each member of the academic staff is expected to engage in research activities besides teaching. Each staff is, therefore, required to develop relevant research proposals and maintain a good balance between research and teaching.

Despite its longstanding engagement in research activities, HU has not formulated comprehensive policies and guidelines to govern its research undertakings. As a result, the university's research activities could not properly address societal problems. There have been serious limitations in maintaining researchers' accountability and transparency in budget utilization as well as in ensuring timely completion and proper dissemination of research outputs to end users. The salience of research policies and guidelines is accentuated in *Higher Education Proclamation 650/2009* (Art. 24/4) which stipulates that "every institution shall issue rules and procedures on research and consultancy standards, code of professional ethics, norms, and responsibilities that shall govern its operations and the activities of its academic staff."

Therefore, it is important to have a strong policy document in place to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings and to increase the practical relevance and effectiveness of the research activities in the university. This research policy is formulated to provide a framework for ensuring the relevance, quality and impact of research projects that will be implemented by the university's staff, students and partners. It is hoped that the policy will create transparency and accountability in research planning, implementation, resource utilization, monitoring, and dissemination of research outputs, and in the assessment of its impact. Towards this end, the policy document outlines mechanisms for enhancing research skills, developing infrastructure, establishing linkages and partnerships, and creating enabling environments for research endeavors.

3. Vision and Mission of Haramaya University Research

3.1. Vision

Haramaya University aspires to become one of the best research universities in Africa by the year 2025.

3.2. Mission

Undertaking demand-driven, problem-solving, and cutting-edge research, and disseminating generated and adapted knowledge and technologies for socio-economic transformation of the society

4. Objectives of the Policy

4.1. General objective

The general objective of the research policy is to establish a framework for guiding the university's overall research endeavors.

4.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

- create enabling environments for staff, students, and partners to conduct need-based and high quality research;
- foster synergy within and across research undertakings;
- facilitate creation of strong linkages and partnerships;
- institutionalize research ethics and ensure good conduct of research;
- ensure transparency and accountability in research planning, funding, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation;
- enhance responsiveness to the social, economic and ecological challenges;
- protect intellectual property rights and ownership of research products;
- facilitate conditions for the commercialization of research products and innovations;
- create mechanisms for dissemination of research outputs; and
- manage conflicts that may arise in the course of action.

5. Definition of Terms

Academic staff: refers to staff employed by the university to conduct both teaching and research. This definition includes two categories of staff: Teaching staff, which refers to staff employed to conduct teaching for 75% of his/her time and research for 25% of his/her time, and research staff, which refers to staff employed to conduct research for 75% of his/her time and teaching for 25% of his/her time;

Center: is a smaller unit that coordinates and promotes highly focused scholarly and creative activities. A Center may require the efforts of faculty from one or several departments either within a single college or multiple colleges who contribute to the Center's mission from different perspectives. A Center promotes research, advances scholarly and creative activities, facilitates

conditions for educational enhancement, and offers public services in a designated field, and provides research facilities for other units and departments;

Data: means recorded information obtained during a research process, regardless of the form or the media on which it may be recorded. It includes computer software (computer programs, databases and documentation thereof) and records of scientific or technical nature, but does not include information incidental to research administration such as financial, administrative, cost or pricing, or management information. In the context of research, data includes both intangible data (statistics, findings, conclusions) and tangible information. Tangible data include, but are not limited to notes, printouts, electronic storage, photographs, slides, negatives, films, scans, images, autoradiograms, electro-physical recordings, gels, blots, spectra, cell lines, reagents, modified organisms, specimens, consent forms, case report forms, collected organisms and other materials that are considered to be relevant sources of information for the research project;

Fabrication: is a process or an action that involves intentional manipulation of data, and or an intentional act of compromising the interpretation of data and/or results;

Falsification: is an act of manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes; or an intentional act of changing or omitting data/results with the consequence of preventing the concerned research the accurate representation it deserves.

Institute: is an organizational unit established to coordinate scholarly and creative activities and as a unit it may have more than one interest or function. An Institute enhances and supports broad-based research efforts and will usually encompass research activities at multiple levels (e.g. across departments, schools, or colleges), and may also include agencies and organizations outside of the University. An Institute may also engage in public services that stem from or are connections of its research program. In addition, an Institute may be composed of several Centers.

Patent: is the exclusive right granted by a legally recognized body to an inventor to manufacture, use, or sell an invention for a certain number of years;

Plagiarism: refers to taking another person's ideas, processes, results or words without giving the appropriate acknowledgments or without obtaining the appropriate consent of the original authors;

Research Group: is a body of researchers that strategically leads, monitors, and evaluates the qualities and performances of particular research activities;

Research Management: part of the research management team's broader research governance practice and deals with wide-ranging activities. Its aim is to support researchers throughout the research processes. This support includes facilitating research priority setting, mobilizing and

managing funding and other resources for research and research capacity building, facilitating research proposal development, following up overall research activities, evaluating and publicizing research outputs, and assessing research impacts;

Research Output: Is tangible or intangible product of research that includes, but not limited to, technology, knowledge and information;

Research partners/collaborators: Parties that contribute to the university's research undertakings by providing technical, financial and material supports. These parties may be entitled to share research outputs as per the agreement they have entered with the university;

Research policy: The principles by which the university's research activities are governed or guided. Research policy offers provisions and sets requirements to govern, guide or direct what should be done by researchers, the University research management and other stakeholders;

Research Theme: is a research cluster or categorization of inquiry or domain of knowledge designed to address broader and interrelating issues in a holistic and multidisciplinary manner with the purpose to generate and transfer knowledge and technologies;

Research: is a systematic inquiry or exploration made to create new knowledge, enhance creative use of the existing knowledge for problem solving, generate new information and inform policy and development practices. In the context of HU, research is done by academic staff and postgraduate students under the mentorship of faculty members.

University: is an institution of higher (or tertiary) education and research which grants academic degrees in various academic disciplines. Universities typically provide undergraduate and postgraduate education

6. Application of the Policy

This policy applies to university research management, staff and student research as well as research undertakings that involve partnerships from within or overseas.

7. Research Coordination

All research endeavors in the university and research undertakings that involve collaboration with national and international organizations and stakeholders shall be aligned with the thematic areas (See *HU Research Thematic Areas*, 2014). All research undertakings shall be coordinated by research theme leaders and Directorate for Research Groups and Partnerships, with the support of the Directorate for Research Extension and Publication, and Directorate for Research Facilities

Management. All university bodies involved in facilitating and coordinating research undertakings work under the leadership of the Office of the Vice-president for Research Affairs.

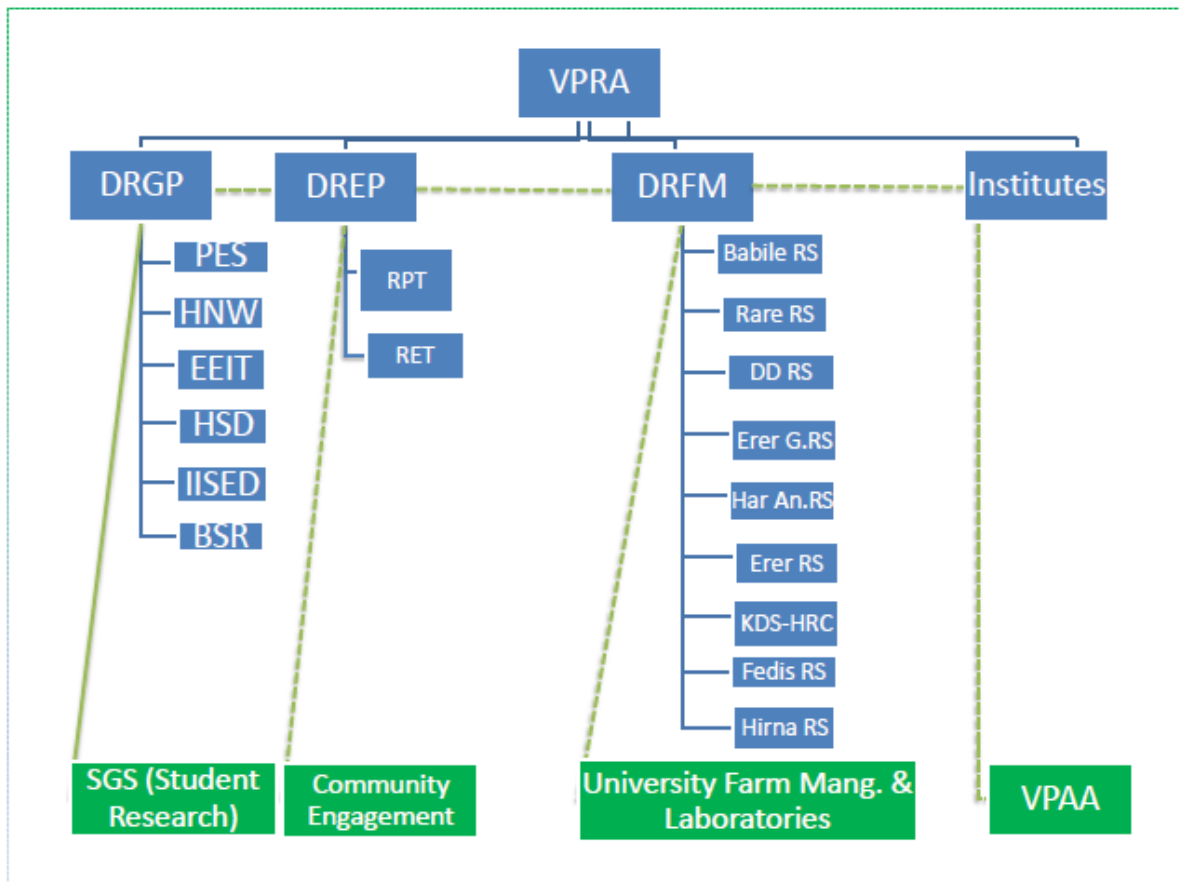


Fig. 1 Structure of research management

Keys

- Blue solid lines and blue boxes indicate components of the major structures under the Research Affairs Office.
- Broken lines and green boxes indicate points of major interfacing required with other units of the University

VPRA=Vice President for Research Affairs; DRGP=Director for Research Groups and Partnerships; DREP=Director for Research Extension and Publication; DRFM=Director for Research Facilities Management; PES=Productivity and Environmental Sustainability research theme; HNW=Human Health, Nutrition, and Welfare research theme; EEIT=Energy, Engineering, and Information Technology research theme; HSD=Human and Social Development research theme; IISED=Institutions, Innovation Systems, and Economic Development research theme; BSR=Basic Science Research theme; RPT=Research Publication Team; RET=Research Extension Team; RS=Research Stations; KDS-HRC=Kersa Demographic Surveillance Health Research Center; and VPAA is Vice President for Academic Affairs.

8. Research Policies and Implementation Strategies

8.1. Freedom of conducting research

For the effective execution of research, academics should have freedom in conducting research with responsibilities and accountability. With this regard, the following principles shall be respected:

- The university shall not discriminate its staff on the basis of race, religious creed, color, national origin, citizenship, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation or any other basis prohibited by law;
- Researchers shall freely select topics of research provided the selection meets national priority areas and falls within the university's *Research Thematic Areas*;
- Researchers shall have the right to independently explain their findings and conclusions. However, the data or evidences must be available for scrutiny and criticism as required by the Office of Research Affairs;
- Researchers can seek support (financial, material and technical) from any legal sources from within the country and overseas for their research project;
- A researcher can publish and disseminate the results and findings of his/her research without any interference or influence from internal management systems or external sponsors so long as the decision to publish or disseminate is consistent with prior agreement made with funders and collaborators.

8.2. Creating a conducive research environment

To encourage researchers, the university strives to foster a conducive environment for research by addressing the following issues:

- The university supports all research thematic areas in terms of facilities, funds, human and other resources;
- The university makes maximum effort to expand and modernize research facilities and ensure their efficient utilization and management;
- Where it cannot support all research demands due to limited resources, the university need to facilitate necessary conditions for research teams to solicit funding from other development partners in and outside the country;
- To encourage participation in research, the university shall create responsive administrative and financial management system;
- The university should continually improve and modernize its information communication technology (ICT) facilities and services;
- The university shall create and periodically update research databases and ensure accessibility;
- The university shall organize short-term trainings to upgrade researchers' methodological and analytical skills;
- The university shall establish incentive package to encourage, recognize and reward high quality research outputs and to mobilize external financial and technical supports;
- The university shall employ full-time research staff, facilitate switching of academic staff to full-time research staff, and use research and post doctoral fellows to ensure uninterrupted availability of competent and adequate human resources; and
- The university shall establish technology incubation/innovation centers to enable further testing and development of new technologies and concepts generated through research for dissemination.

8.3. Research ethics

Research practices should not violate established professional ethics pertaining to the health, safety, privacy, and other personal rights of people. With this regard, the university should establish institutional Research Ethical Clearance Board. The Board shall consist of subject matter experts and representatives of relevant regulatory bodies, and may co-opt other members or consult other bodies of relevance. All research activities related to i) human subjects; ii) confidential, sensitive and private information; iii) live animal subjects and iv) research undertakings of which activities or

results may have negative impact on the environment, shall get ethical clearance prior to the commencement of the research.

8.4. Research misconduct

The importance of integrity in research cannot be overemphasized. Research misconduct destroys the standards and values that the university attempts to inspire in the community. Research misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Research misconduct may also occur when a researcher uses research facilities/resources for other purposes that are not specified in research proposal/protocol. Denial of research partner(s) to collaborate in research activities or to get access to the research data and authorship/patent right is also considered as research misconduct. Therefore, each member of the university community has a responsibility to foster an environment which promotes intellectual honesty and integrity, and which does not tolerate misconduct in any aspect of research or scholarly endeavor.

To handle allegation of research misconduct, Office of the Research Affairs shall set forth procedures for investigating the allegation. The allegation of research misconduct must be proven by a preponderance of the evidence gathered by the university's Research Steering Group for appropriate disciplinary actions.

8.5. Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest is a situation in which an employee has the opportunity to compromise the interest of the university and others for financial or other personal advantages. A conflict of interest may arise when there is a divergence between an individual's private interests and his or her professional obligations. It may also arise when actions by individuals or groups is determined by considerations of personal gain as the expense of the university's mission to provide public good.

In order to minimize the occurrence of conflict of interest, the university shall:

- reward researchers for their contributions through consulting fees and sharing royalties resulting from the commercialization of their works and
- conduct awareness creation activities on situations that generate conflicts of interest.

If conflict of interest arises despite the proactive measures taken, the Office of Research Affairs shall form *ad hoc* committee that scrutinizes the matter for disciplinary actions as per the university's Senate Legislation and other related regulations.

8.6. Development and approval of research projects

- All research projects shall fall within the university's research thematic areas and priorities;
- Research proposals shall be prepared following the university's research proposal guideline (See *HU Research Proposal Guideline*);
- All research proposals shall be evaluated through peer review. Evaluation will be accomplished in two-step peer-review processes by selected subject area experts. The first step is a preliminary written document/proposal review based evaluation to select potential proposals that will appear for second step evaluation. Following this, the selected proposals will be orally defended for further scrutiny (See *HU Research Proposal Guideline*);
- The final decision (acceptance for funding or rejection) of the reviewed proposals shall be made by the *Research Steering Group* under the Office of Vice-president for Research Affairs. The decision of the committee shall be based on evaluation results and availability of fund;
- Researchers whose proposals are rejected shall also be notified with reasons for rejection upon request; and
- To handle enquiries and complaints relating to such decisions, the research office shall enforce the existing complaints handling procedures.

8.7. Rules regarding research fund use

- Research funds shall be solicited at an individual, department, school, institute or inter-institutional levels from international and local sources;
- For all university funded research projects, researchers shall sign agreement with the university upon approval of the research project;
- Where there is an interest of joint ownership of research output between the funder and university, contract shall be signed between the two parties;
- Research funds shall be spent within the restrictions of the contract or grant;
- The principal investigator (PI) and responsible financial officer should continually oversee budget use to prevent overdraft;

- The principal investigator shall ensure appropriate utilization of the grant by strictly adhering to specification in the project document;
- Any research project whose progress has been found unsatisfactory by the University *Research Steering Group* on two consecutive evaluations shall be discontinued/suspended and the investigators shall be held accountable;
- Research Thematic Area Leaders shall follow up to researchers' effective utilization of funds; and
- University sponsored research funds shall be used to hire consultants or other experts only under special circumstances with approval of the Research Steering Group.

8.8. Eligibility and responsibility of the principal investigator

- For university funded projects, only qualified academic staff are eligible to be a principal investigator;
- Assigning individuals who are not members of the University academic staff as PIs requires approval of the *Research Steering Group*;
- If the PI leaves the university for a period exceeding three months, she/he must substitute other eligible person with the approval of the concerned Research Thematic Area Leader and in consultation with the Director for Research Groups and Partnerships;
- When co-investigators fail to discharge their duties, the PI should formally communicate the problem to the concerned thematic area leader for appropriate action;
- The PI should consult and get approval of the concerned thematic area leader when change or modification to the approved plan of action and/or methodologies is required;
- The PI can make budget adjustment in consultation with thematic area leader. However, budget transfer to personnel expenditure should be made based on strong justification;
- As far as the budget is utilized within the project period, the PI is entitled to request no-cost time extension to complete the project activities; and
- The PI is responsible for overseeing the proper closeout of sponsored projects, including timely submission of the required technical and financial reports.

8.9. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of Research

To be successful, research requires effective monitoring and evaluation systems that provide information on its timely commencement, progress, resource utilization, and expected output. Monitoring and evaluation shall be made at thematic area and institution levels.

Based on the original project proposal, research thematic area leaders shall:

- ensure timely commencement of approved research projects;
- assess proper management and execution of research activities by employing established monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- identify problems encountered in the course of research and provide the necessary supports to overcome the problems;
- monitor the extent of participation of the parties involved in the concerned project; and
- ensure proper closure of projects, including timely submission of all the required technical and financial reports.

8.10. Overall system level monitoring and evaluation

For effective dissemination and utilization of research output, the Office of Vice-president for Research Affairs should set up and implement feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of research undertakings in solving societal problems. In addition, the office shall enforce a system level research performance monitoring and impact evaluation. The office is responsible for facilitating the continuous system level research performance monitoring together with other clients and stakeholders. Furthermore, the office shall commission both internal and external impact evaluation every four years and report the outcome of evaluation to the university's top management/Senate as well as the University Board for implementing the required change.

9. Ownership and Retention of and Access to Research Data

Research data records are critical for the reconstruction and evaluation of research reports. To this effect:

- both the university and its researchers have rights and responsibilities concerning access to, use of, and maintenance of original research data;
- except where precluded by the specific terms of sponsorship or other agreements, tangible research property, including scientific data and other records of research conducted under the auspices of the university, are the property of the university;

- Research data shall be retained for a minimum of three years after the final project close-out, and the PI is responsible for the maintenance and retention of research data;
- Up on leaving the university for any reason, a researcher shall transfer research data together with detailed technical and financial progress reports to the research office and his/her substitute PI following data sharing guideline of the university; and
- Thematic area leaders shall be responsible for assuring the retention of completed research outputs in the university's research database.

10. Intellectual Property Right

Intellectual property (IP) is the product of thought, creativity, and intellectual effort generated by researchers in the course of their research and approved by appropriate legal entities. This may include patentable information, discovery, know-how, trade secrets, methods, computer software, designs relating to devices, processes, chemical compounds, treatment, new varieties, or others which may provide commercial advantages. For potentially patentable inventions, the university shall set out a guideline that helps govern individual researchers' benefit in accordance with national patent-ship right.

In principle, ownership of research outputs shall rest with the university. However, the university should ensure that researchers benefit from intellectual contributions that they have made based on the university's proprietorship guideline. Where the concerned research is partially or wholly based on an external financial source and where there is a desire for shared proprietorship of research outputs, a different modality of ownership shall be formulated and be part of the approval process.

11. Dissemination of Research Outputs

Only conducting problem-oriented research does not bring the anticipated socio-economic transformation unless the generated knowledge and technologies reach the end-users and utilized. Hence, the university should strengthen mechanisms of disseminating and commercializing its research outputs. To this effect:

- The university should ensure that research results are disseminated widely through different mechanisms to the intended beneficiaries;
- The university should encourage projects that aim at enhancing use of research outputs by industries, end-user communities and policy makers;

- On completion of each project, a researcher should use standard reporting formats to disseminate findings or results of his/her research to stakeholders and policy makers;
- A researcher should publish his/her research outputs on peer-reviewed scientific journals, proceedings, policy briefs, books, working documents, etc., as part of his/her effort to disseminate the output of his/her research to potential users; and
- A researcher should not publish any part of a research work without the consent of his/her co-investigator(s).

12. Establishing Research Centers and Institutes

The university establishes research centers/institutes to raise the profile of its research, focus strengths in areas where there is a concentration of research excellence, including areas of applied research, and to attract external resources for research undertakings. Research centers/institutes help position and promote the university's areas of research excellence and maximize the university's institutional prestige and reputation in research performance. They also serve as a vehicle for engaging with other research institutions and industries and foster interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary partnerships.

Whilst centers and institutes are closely related, institutes are broader in scope since they promote a broad-ranging, interdisciplinary research efforts often implemented at multiple levels. Centers are organized and structured to accomplish well-defined, focused, and interdisciplinary areas and for providing closely related capacity building and other services to industry and the public. In the context of the university, centers and institutes shall be hosted by the Office of Vice President for Research Affairs.

12.1. Procedures and requirements for establishing Centers and Institutes

Establishment of a center or an institute can be initiated by a team of faculty, college and university management, and national and international partners. In the latter case, the president of the university shall determine the interests of the external partner and then enlist assistance of the VPRA who will in turn work with the appropriate dean(s) and faculty in developing a proposal that meets the interests of the external partner, sets procedures and requirements for establishing centers and institutes, and advances the mission and priorities of the university. In such cases, the proposal will be presented to the appropriate college/colleges and the Senate prior to obtaining the support

of the external partner (donor). In all other cases, initiators should develop a concept note wherein they propose the importance of the desired centre or institute and submit their concept note for extensive, informal and formal discussions. This will be followed by the writing and approval of a full proposal at different levels.

Proposals written to establish institutes/centers are initially reviewed by appropriate department(s), college dean(s), and thematic area leader(s). Proposals that obtained the approval of supports of the concerned offices would then be submitted to the Office of Vice-president for Research for further approval. Completed proposals are then forwarded to the University Senate for approval. Supported proposals may then be forwarded, as deemed necessary, by the President to the Administrative Board of the University for Final Approval. Particularly proposals that require additional public funding may require approval of the Board.

The proposal should contain the following elements:

- a. Name of the proposed center/institute:** The name should be descriptive of the center's/institute's core activities. Initiators should choose a center/institute name that will not impinge on the territory of an existing center or institute;
- b. Sponsor(s):** initiators should clearly indicate the names of the organizations or partners which will sponsor the center/institute's operation, initially and in the longer term and outline the center/institute's mechanism for sustainability;
- c. Mission and Purpose of center/institute:** the initiators should clearly indicate the mission or purpose of the center/institute, its goals and objectives, the apparent needs and opportunities to which the desired center/institute responds, the association of the centre/institution with the mission and goals of the university, and any involvement of the center/institute in developing academic courses or degree programs;
- d. Membership:** the names of individuals, organizations or other parties that will participate in the activities of the desired center/institute should be unambiguously indicated together with their responsibilities and accountabilities;
- e. Leadership and Organization:** it is also important to provide clear information regarding the leadership structure of the center/institute, the role of other faculty/staff/administrators in the university in the proposed centre/institute and the nature of participation, level of involvement and with what degree of responsibility or accountability each individual member should be engaged;

- f. Involved Departments and/or Colleges:** the names of departments and/or colleges to be involved in the center/institute, the nature of their involvement and the names of faculty/staff that represent these departments/colleges should be clearly specified;
- g. Short-Term Plans:** it is important to indicate the focuses, activities or accomplishments that are envisioned for the desired center/institute in the first 1-3 years of operation;
- h. Long-Term Plans:** in addition to indicating the desired center's or institute's short-term plans, initiators should clearly indicate focuses, activities or accomplishments to be envisioned within 5-10 years period;
- i. Budget:** the initiators should unambiguously indicate sources of fund for establishing the desired centre or institute;
- j. Personnel, Space and Equipment Requirements:** initiators should also indicate if establishment of the proposed center/institute requires additional hiring, dedication of special spaces for operations, calls for additional or specialized equipment, and from where or whom those supports can be obtained;
- k. Bylaws:** The bylaws describe matters that are vital to the operation of a center/institute, including but not limited to i) the **operating procedures** of the center/institute (e.g. meetings, decision making procedures); ii) **rules and regulations** pertaining to the center/institute; iii) **governing structure**; iv) duties of **leaders** and nomination/election procedures; v) management of membership and duties of **members**; and 6) **amendment procedures** of the bylaws.