National Open University of Nigeria

Policy Title	Research Policy
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Approved By:	The University Senate
Manager/Driver:	Directorate of Research Administration (DRA)
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1.0.   General Introduction

Research Policy of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is an instrumental framework aligning with our institution's profound commitment to providing highly accessible and quality education. Rooted in our vision of being the foremost university championing education marked by social justice, equity, equality, and national cohesion; this policy serves as a beacon guiding the conduct of research within our academic community.

At NOUN, our mission is to deliver functional, cost-effective, and flexible learning that imparts lifelong value to quality education, echoing our dedication to knowledge seekers from all walks of life. In tandem with our objectives, this policy embraces the principles of equity and equality in education, particularly in the university sector, ensuring a broader and more accessible educational landscape throughout Nigeria.
We strive to enhance education for all and lifelong learning, embody a global learning culture, and leverage information and communication technology for the widespread dissemination of instructional resources. Our commitment to flexible yet qualitative education resonates with our objectives, aiming to reduce the cost, inconveniences, and barriers to easy access to education and its delivery.

As members of the NOUN community, we invite you to engage with this policy as a collaborative guidepost, uniting us in the responsible and impactful pursuit of research excellence that mirrors the values enshrined in our vision, mission, and objectives.

1.1   Purpose of the Research Policy

The Research Policy of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) serves as a pivotal instrument designed to harmonize and fortify the symbiotic relationship between academic and operational activities within our esteemed institution. Its primary objectives are stated as follows:

Promote Academic Excellence: The policy establishes a framework that upholds the highest standards of academic rigour, integrity, and innovation, fostering an environment conducive to the pursuit of groundbreaking research that aligns with NOUN's commitment to being a leading institution in accessible and quality education.

Guidance for Researchers: By providing clear guidelines and principles, the policy acts as a compass for researchers, offering direction on ethical practices, responsible conduct, and the dissemination of knowledge. It ensures that academic endeavours contribute meaningfully to the enrichment of scholarship and the broader academic community.

Alignment with Vision and Mission: The policy aligns research activities with the overarching vision and mission of NOUN, ensuring that every research endeavour contributes to the realization of the university's goals of social justice, equity, equality, and national cohesion through enhanced and accessible education.

Operational Efficiency: It enhances operational efficiency by streamlining research processes, resource allocation, and collaboration mechanisms. This efficiency is crucial for the effective integration of research within the broader academic and operational landscape of the university.

Resource Optimization: The policy facilitates the judicious use of resources, including information and communication technology, ensuring that research initiatives are conducted in a manner that maximizes impact while minimizing costs and inconveniences.

Quality Assurance: By setting standards for the quality of research outputs, the policy contributes to the assurance of academic excellence, strengthening the reputation of NOUN as a hub for impactful and high-caliber research.

Inclusivity and Equity: In line with the university's objectives, the policy promotes inclusivity and equity in research opportunities, ensuring that the benefits of research are accessible to a diverse community of scholars and learners. In essence, the Research Policy is a cornerstone in the holistic framework of NOUN, enhancing the synergy between academic and operational realms, and guiding the university towards the fulfillment of its academic mission and objectives.

Policy Statement (Principle)

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)'s Research Policy underscores our commitment to providing highly accessible and quality education. Aligned with our vision and mission, this policy sets forth guidelines to promoting academic excellence, guides researchers ethically, and streamlines operational processes. It aims to optimize resources, ensure inclusivity and equity, and foster a global learning culture. By facilitating flexible, qualitative education, reducing costs, and leveraging

technology, the policy positions NOUN at the forefront of impactful research. We, as members of the NOUN community, pledge to uphold these principles, contributing collectively to the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and societal development.

1.2   Policy Framework

This policy establishes the research environment within which all those engaged in research at the university shall operate. It also provides an **over-arching framework** for the structure, development and implementation of all research activities at NOUN for the benefit of human kind. *(Note: The Research Ethics, Intellectual Property, Plagiarism, Postgraduate Research, and Research Publications policies are sub-items within this overarching policy).*

It also recognizes the uniqueness of the university's mandate in its intent to pursue research for greater visibility of research which should stimulate new research opportunities and collaborations.

2.0   Scope

This is a university-wide statute applicable to all types of research that meets with the vision and mission of the university and the Nigerian society.

3.0   Aim

This is to promote a research culture in NOUN and to strengthen the research scholarship of staff and students to meet societal needs.

4.0   Definitions

For the purpose of this statute and unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Academic units: Faculties, Departments, Institutes, Centres
Academic staff: Includes all staff that have been employed as academic staff to teach and carry out research.

Dean: Head of a Faculty
Academic Director: Head of an Academic Directorate, Institute or Centre
DRA: Directorate of Research Administration
ODL: Open and Distance Learning
Collaboration: A collaboration occurs when an organisation or individual either within or external to the university work together where there is a commitment of resources by both parties. While this commitment may vary, collaborations raise specific research integrity issues. All research collaborations will be dealt with through a written agreement.

Research: Research is original, independent investigation undertaken to contribute to knowledge and understanding and, in the case of some disciplines, cultural innovation or aesthetic refinement. Research typically involves inquiry of an experimental or critical nature driven by hypothesis or intellectual positions capable of rigorous assessment by experts in a given discipline. Research includes work of direct relevance to the specific needs of a society as defined, communities, government, industry and commerce respectively.

In some disciplines, research may be embodied in the form of artistic works, performances or designs that lead to new or substantially improved insights. Research may include: contributions to the intellectual underpinning of subjects and disciplines (for example, dictionaries and scholarly editions), the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, communications or processes, the synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative. Research findings must be open to scrutiny or formal evaluation by experts within the field. This may be achieved through various forms of dissemination including, but not limited to, publication, manufacture, construction, public presentation, or provision of confidential reports.

Research does not include activities that are part of routine standard practice or outputs that do not embody original Research. This excludes: routine testing; data-collection; preparation for teaching where it does not embody original research; the legal and administrative aspects of commercialization activities; professional activities that do not embody original research.

Acknowledgement: Creating a contribution to a publication or research project where the contribution is not a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution significant for a person to be recognized as an author.

Author: An individual who has made a significant/substantial contribution to a research output and could be held accountable for the research output.

RETRIDOL:		Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning
Conflicts Interest:	of	A situation where other interests have the potential to compromise judgments and decisions that could otherwise be made impartially.

5.0 Policy Content and Guidelines

This research policy incorporates the following guidelines, some of which details are in separate stand-alone documents:

a) Research Administration
b) Research Ethics
c) Intellectual Property and Ownership
d) Research and Publications Committee
e) Research Funding
f) Copyright
g) Plagiarism
h) Promoting Excellence in Research Policy
i) Linkage Arrangements (Linkages and Partnerships, MOUs)
j) Staff Research Development
k) Postgraduate Student Research and Supervision
l) Appointment and Remuneration of Distant/External Research Supervisors
m) Students Employer-Sponsored Research projects

6.0 Research Administration Policy

6.1 The **University Senate Research Board** (USRB) is responsible for oversight of the quality of staff research and enhancement of the student research experience at NOUN.

(a) At NOUN, at the top echelon of Research Administration is the **University Senate Research Board** (USRB) by Nigeria culture but whose day-to-day activities would be carried out by the **Directorate of Research Administration (DRA)**. The Chair of USRB is a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) representing the Vice-Chancellor who is the statutory Chairman of all committees in the university. The DRA reports to the Senate through the Chair of USRB. The DRA advises USRB and informs its Board amongst other roles, on the Research strategies to be pursued in the university; develops policies (including strategic and scholarships policy for research students) and reviews progress in these areas.

(b) Faculties and Research Centres are required to establish Research Committees comprising all departmental heads to support the respective research activities of their staff and thesis of postgraduate students. Both committees are expected to comply with and oversee the implementation of university-wide research

policies. Faculty Research committees (FRC) are formed by Deans to advise the USRB and their own faculties on Research matters.

(c)	The DRA provides research services for all staff. This support includes but is not limited to:

(i)	Assisting USRB with coordinating the activities of its subcommittees and monitoring external research policy developments.

(ii)	Managing the internal administration of the DRA.

(iv)	Securing and supporting external research funding from the public and private sectors.

(v)	Monitoring and reporting on externally funded research grants

(vi)	Providing professional development opportunities for staff to enhance their research performance.

6.2 RETRIDOL *(Refer to the RETRIDOL Manual and Policy for more details)*

## 6.3	Research Leave Administration

Academic staff are eligible to apply for leave in support of their research including Research and Study Leave, Overseas Conference Leave, and Exchange Leave. Staff are to apply through their faculty committees which now recommend the staff. DRA will forward such to the USRB for presentation to the Vice-Chancellor.

## 6.4	Evaluation and Monitoring of Performance

(a)	The DVC office has responsibility for the evaluation of the university's overall research performance. Annually, the DRA will advise the DVC and USRB on the university's performance, its alignment with external research funding sources available, opportunities for development and the impact and intensity of its research.

(b)	The relevant FRC and Centre Research Committees will monitor the performance of Faculties and Research Centres in accord with the evaluation of the university's research performance.

(c)	Staff are required to annually complete the staff evaluation process through which their Head of Department, Director, or DVC will evaluate their research performance.

(d)	Staff are required to participate in the external assessment of performance such as the Faculty Research Committee (FRC).

(e)	Staff are required to supply full and accurate details of their annual research outputs as required by their Dean of Faculty (or delegate)/Director (or delegate). The information will be supplied to DRA.

(f)	The DRA will publish an annual list of staff and student publications in their annual report.

## 7.0	Research Ethics Policy

All staff and students are required to carry out their research in compliance with all the university's ethical and contractual obligations. Therefore, all academic staff, students, and research collaborators of the university are required to make themselves aware

and follow the contents of the university policy on research ethics. *(Refer to the Research Ethics Policy for more details).*

8.0   Promoting Excellence in Research Policy

The broad principles that guide research are the maintenance of high ethical standards, validity and accuracy in the collection and reporting of data or results.

(a) Research activities in NOUN shall be grouped and administered as follows:

    (i)   Academic Discipline Research and Faculty-based Research

    (ii)   Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System Research

    (iii)   Postgraduate Student-Employer Sponsored Research

(iv)   Individual and National-Based Research.

(b)   Each academic staff member will carry out independent research, scholarship and/or creative activities that are appropriate to their discipline.

In doing so, they will, individually or in collaboration with colleagues:

(i)   supervise research students;

(ii)   broadly disseminate research results (i.e. through more than one medium or one audience such as seminars, workshops, conferences) including through their teaching practices such as update review of learning materials, instructional delivery scope and methods, and, whilst appropriately, protecting the results of their research;

(iii)   be active within appropriate professional and discipline communities and external stakeholders;

(iv)   contribute to the university research environment through activities such as mentoring, engagement in new research initiatives and strengthening the research infrastructure; and

(v)   participate in initiatives designed to secure financial support for research activities from external sources (including, for example, government funding, industry partnerships and contracts, philanthropic gifts, research translation and commercialization opportunities).

(c)   The requirement to undertake research is an obligatory career expectation and will be balanced with the other obligations of academic staff including teaching and administrative responsibilities.

(d)   Nothing in this policy is to be construed so as to prevent Heads of Department from allocating teaching and other responsibilities to an academic staff member in the light of the research record of the academic staff member.

9.0   Resources in Support of Research

The general guiding policy here is that sources of funds/funding can be both internal and external.

(a)   **University Research Grant**

(i)   The university shall through a committee of the University Senate Research Board concern itself with the allocation of all research funding in the university. The board, as stated earlier, is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor or his designated deputy Vice-Chancellor with the DRA as secretariat to recommend research proposals that

have met the pre-qualifying conditions. The composition of the board shall be as prescribed by the University Council. The board shall also support, where necessary, strategic support for external funding bids by staff and/or agents of the university. The board shall also provide a certain percentage of its funding to support early career researchers and staff at Lecturer/Senior Lecturer level who are in their early years at the university who have not previously received external research funding support.

(ii)   Faculty Research Grants
Faculties may allocate research funding according to their internal processes.

(b)   External Contracts/External Research Provisions and Obligations
All applications for any external research funding are to be submitted through DRA and would be administered by it. The DRA provides the contract, financial and non-financial management services for the university's grant management process. All staff are expected to comply with the process for the management of external research, consultancy and related contracts policy in the costing and pricing of external research and consultancy. They may also do research or consultancy under the entitlement to undertake Private Work Policy and are required to report such activity to their Head of Department or Dean of Faculty. All Staff doing private work under the entitlement of this policy may choose to manage their funds through the DRA.

10.0   Copyright Policy
Copyright refers to the conditionality that grants legal right of the owner of intellectual property. *(Refer to the Copyright Policy for more details)*

11.0   Plagiarism Policy
Plagiarism refers to such academic activities sometimes described as literary theft, presenting as new an original idea or product, derived from an existing source without crediting the source. **(Refer to the Plagiarism Policy for more details).**

12.0   Staff Research Development Policy
An important element of the characteristics of a university is the requirement to engage in research at a higher level. Therefore, the appointment of new academic staff must give appropriate consideration to the quality of their research record or research potential commensurate with the requirements of the position.

(b)   An academic staff member employed without the terminal degree of a PhD must be ready to undergo a postgraduate training available within the university or external to the university through a policy enunciation.

(c)   Academic staff must be required as part of the annual workload assessment programme to prepare a research plan and to review that plan periodically in consultation with their Head of Department or Director. Consultation should include a review of research objectives, anticipated applications for external research funds, details of other initiatives to secure financial support for their research activities,

opportunities for collaboration, timelines and expected outputs for the dissemination of their research results, protection of their research results where appropriate, supervision opportunities, activities within the research community, activities to enhance the impact of their research. This process should also identify the support staff needs to facilitate their research and scholarship, and reflect any special agreements reached regarding teaching, administration, research duties and research training and/or development opportunities for research, according to the career stage of the staff member.

(d)   Heads of Department should ensure that newly appointed staff are familiar with research evaluations, research training and funding opportunities and the importance of publishing in suitable venues, both within the university and external to it.

13.0   Research Centres and Institutes: Distinctiveness Themes
(a) Characteristics of Research Centres and Institutes

The university has established a number of research centres to raise the research profile of the university. Research Institutes and Centres are approved by Council. The title "Centre" or "Institute" is only to be used after approval. Research groupings not so approved should use other general identifiers such as "project" or "unit".

Each of the Institutes or Centres is established to focus strengths in areas where there is (or the university wishes to develop) a competitive advantage of research excellence culture (including areas of applied research); and at the same time, maximise its potential to attract external research funding.

(b)   **Research Centres and Institutes are:**

(i)   high quality and competitive, and may include involvement of nationally and internationally recognised researchers.

(ii)   consistent with the strategic interests of the university.

(iii)   expected to deliver outcomes that would not otherwise occur.

(iv)   aligned to the priorities of research funders and the interests of end-users.

(v)   substantial, involving an integrated group of researchers generating significant research outputs and attracting sizeable Research funding.

(vi)   research centres to help position and promote the university's areas of research excellence and build the university's research reputation.

(vii)   avenues to create a suite of multidisciplinary themes to define the academic emphasis of the university. They promote an outlook that goes beyond disciplinary, department, faculty and other traditional boundaries, frame and develop NOUN's distinctive teaching, research and public engagement endeavours.

(viii)   vehicles for engaging with other research institutions and industry and facilitate interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary relationships.

14.0   Linkage Arrangements (Linkages and Partnerships, MOUs)
14.1   Collaborative Research

The current policy of NOUN is that any full-time member of staff of the university who applies for external research grants and contracts shall identify the university as the employer institution, and activities shall be in accordance with the dictates of this policy. However, if an external researcher wishes to engage in research using the university facilities including her staff, such joint research activity shall be termed collaborative. Such external researcher who has primary work responsibilities in an external institution but hopes to conduct the project under the auspices of NOUN, shall also identify the university as an employer.

If the full-time employee of the university serves as the Principal Investigator (PI), the university shall be the lead institution in the proposal. Full-time employees of the university who serve as Co-PIs on collaborative grants led by other institutions shall design the proposal so that the university serves as a subcontractor. This policy applies even in cases in which the applicant does not receive compensation through the grant. Exceptions to these procedures shall be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on application through DRA.

15.0 Postgraduate Student Research and Supervision Policy

The peculiarity of the National Open University of Nigeria as a distance learning institution ascribes a unique dimension to research activities at the university. The research activities of staff and postgraduate students are of high importance. Since most distance learning students are mature and professionals, postgraduate research activities in NOUN shall be deemed as equally very essential as they are expected to provide relevance and application of new academic knowledge to the improvement of professional practices represented by various groups of NOUN mature professional students.

- All research shall be carried out within the prescription of the university's policies; therefore, all researchers are obliged to comply.
- It is the prerogative of staff to venture into research and make public the results of their findings.
- NOUN staff are encouraged to access grants and other research funding opportunities to support their research.

The peculiarities of Open and Distance Learning institutions necessitate continuous institution-based research activities for the improvement of operations and management of their services. Consequently, all categories of staff in NOUN (academic and non-academic) shall be encouraged to participate in ODL research projects.

The university shall ensure that an enabling environment is created for research to be conducted within the principles of best scientific and academic practices. (**Refer to the Postgraduate Research Policy for more details**).

16.0 University Research and Publications Committee

The University Research and Publications Committee is a standing committee of the university established to encourage research and publications among staff and students.

16.1 Mandate

The committee shall execute its mandate by:

a) establishing, updating and administering research policy for the university.
b) administering support programmes for faculty research.
c) presenting an annual report on its activities to USRB.
d) bringing alternate sources of funding to the attention of the faculty or unit
e) stimulating interest in and discussion of research ideas and methodologies among academics and students
f) providing practical criticism of and support for research projects
g) coordinating peer review assessment or presentation of outgoing papers or research papers to ensure that they meet best practice or high standards.
h) promoting faculty-based research and publications within the university community.
i) reviewing the university research policies when so instructed by the appropriate central committee.
j) establishing the criteria for judging research publications, policies and priorities as they affect grant expenditures.

16.2 Additional Responsibilities of the CRP

a) Liaise with DRA on compilation of research reports and profiles of academics, and ensuring an effective coordination of response to calls among academics.
b) Assess editorial quality and content of publications.
c) Consult with editors of publications of interest concerning editorial policy to enable them to appropriately guide faculty members.
d) Make recommendations to the faculty on the needs and adequacy of identified publications.
e) Inform and educate faculty and staff on copyright and plagiarism issues and policies in the course of their activities at the faculty level.
f) Serve as a channel of communication within the faculty, and provide research support.
g) Coordinate the publication of Faculty Journal where it is available, and/or guide the process of publishing a new Journal by liaising with the Library and DRA for guidance and approval.
h) Advice and report to the Dean and the Faculty Leadership on all activities concerning the committee.

16.3 Outcome of the Research and Publications Committee

a) The efforts of the committee on Research and Publication shall lead to standard research and publications outcomes.
b) The committee through its function will alleviate the challenge of funding among researchers.
c) There will be proper administration of research policies in the faculties and academic centres.
d) It will increase the visibility of NOUN research publications nationally and globally in various platforms both online and offline. *(Refer to the Research and Publications Policy for more details).*

17.0 Intellectual Property and Ownership Policy (IPOP)

a) Intellectual Property (IP) is a very important issue in the academic environment of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

b). NOUN strongly desires to promote the creation of IP within the ambience of the government's policy for creating a knowledge-based economy; to increase the number of patents and innovations coming out of Nigeria's institutions, and to transfer that technology into viable commercial entities. The university identifies and supports the principle that IP developed at NOUN should be used maximally for public benefit. *(Refer to the Intellectual Property Policy for more details).*

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