



PROCEDURE AND REGULATIONS OF THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) OF SPONSORED RESEARCH

SCOPE: This document applies to all Stellenbosch University (SU) Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS) Principal Investigators (PIs) of research grants and subcontracts.

BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE PROCEDURE AND REGULATION: Researchers throughout the SU FMHS have been successful securing research grant money from sponsors. The SU FMHS is committed to provide responsible stewardship of all research grant funding. While the process of managing sponsored research awards is a shared responsibility between the PI and the staff of the Research Grants management Office (RGMO), both have unique areas of primary responsibility. The purpose of this document is to outline those specific responsibilities; present an overview of project management with special emphasis on the PI's and Co-PI's role in sponsored projects management to manage successfully a sponsored research award.

1. INTRODUCTION

The PI are ultimately responsible for assuring compliance with applicable University policies and procedures, US-, EU-, GB-Policy or regulations and for the oversight of the research study determined by the sponsor. Although the PI may delegate tasks to members of his/her research team, s/he retains the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study.

2. WHO MAY SERVE AS A PI

Being granted PI status is a privilege granted to eligible University personnel who meet the criteria identified below. All persons granted PI authority must accept all of the responsibilities associated with the application for, and administration of awarded sponsored projects. The following individuals may serve as PI:

2.1 Faculty members: All categories of faculty members may serve as PI on applications for sponsored funding administered through the SU FMHS if their head of department and the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS allow them to do so. Such approval is indicated by the Letter of Support (LoS) from the head of department and the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS.

2.2 Other Staff: Other SU FMHS faculty staff may serve in this role if they have appropriate qualifications to conduct the research and if they have obtained written approval to conduct the research from their immediate supervisor, the head of the department Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS. Such approval is indicated by the Letter of Support (LoS) from the head of department and the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS.

2.3 Post-Doctoral Fellows: All post-doctoral fellows who have the written approval of the head of the department (HOD) or of the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS. The Post-Doctoral Fellow's mentor must be listed as a co-principal investigator. The Letter of Support (LoS) from the HOD and the Deputy Dean indicates such approval: Research of SU FMHS.

2.4 Undergraduate and graduate students: *Neither* undergraduate *nor* graduate students may be designated as PIs. When a sponsor's program guidelines require the student to be listed as PI on the grant application, the student's mentor, the head of the department and the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS must grant the student written approval to be PI. The students mentor must be listed as a co-principal investigator. Such approval is indicated by the Letter of Support (LoS) from the head of department and the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURE

3.1 As project manager, the PI have the following primary responsibilities:

- Managing the resources (funds and staff) of the project
- Planning and controlling the work of the project
- Communicating with all individuals and groups about the project and
- Agree with all Key Personnel on % effort and level of payment on the project

3.2 Proposal preparation and submission

3.2.1 Researchers may serve as PI on applications for sponsored funding administered through the SU FMHS, only if their HOD or the Deputy Dean: Research of SU FMHS allow them to do so. An Internal Letter of Intent, stating the applicant's eligibility to serve as PI and signed by both the HOD

or Deputy Dean: Research **and** the PI must be handed in at the RGMO before the application process can be initiated (*see Guideline for submitting and Internal Letter of Intent*)

- 3.2.2 The PI ensure that the entire proposal meets requirements outlined in the grant announcement or other application instructions. Examples of such requirements include, but are not limited to deadlines, page limitations, page set-up, and mailing addresses. The PI may delegate this responsibility to departmental administrative staff.
- 3.2.3 The PI prepare the technical proposal and collaborate with RGMO in its preparation to meet the requirements of the sponsor and the RGMO procedure and regulations regarding timelines for successful submission.
- 3.2.4 The PI take responsibility for collecting in time the CV's or biosketches of all key personnel. They ensure that the CV's or Biosketches are updated current versions and in correct format as per the sponsors' rules.
- 3.2.5 They collect the relevant Letters of Support (LoS) stating the specific support, from faculty management and other collaborators and institutions relevant to the project. Faculty management must also state the PIs eligibility to apply for the sponsored research.
- 3.2.6 In collaboration with RGMO, they prepare the budget and its justification.
- 3.2.7 In collaboration with RGMO, the proposal is submitted.

3.3 Post-Award management of the project

- 3.3.1 The PI responsibilities may be divided into two related but distinctly different sets of activities: those activities involving the management of the work of the project, and responsible spending of project funds. While the work of the project should drive the financial activities, sound management practices in both areas are required.
- 3.3.2 Use of project management software, e.g. Microsoft Excel, can assist the PI in reporting project progress, tracking work, analysing project generated data, fund management, and time keeping.
- 3.3.3 Although sponsored research funds are managed by the SU accounting system, the PI are encouraged to develop means by which they or their delegate, can track and reconcile expenditures. Similarly, the SU payroll system will handle the distribution of salaries, but the PI and Co-PI are still responsible for the day-to-day recordkeeping related to the hours and tasks worked on by each member of the project's team. Timesheet templates are obtainable from the RGMO. To ensure compliance with the time-effort reporting, the PI timeously sign and certify effort for themselves and employees on the grants.
- 3.3.4 The PI ensure the integrity and safeguarding of notebooks and scientific data.
- 3.3.5 The PI ensure the completion, accuracy and timeliness of all reports.
- 3.3.6 The PI in collaboration with RGMO ensure the quality, timeliness, and performance of sub-awardees.
- 3.3.7 The PI in collaboration with RGMO initiate requests for re-budgeting as the sponsor requires.
- 3.3.8 All awards are made to the University and not to the individual investigator. In the event a PI leaves the University, he/she must, in advance, notify other PIs on the project, the department head, deputy dean for research, the RGMO and the sponsor of the project of such departure and seek appropriate next step instructions from the department head, deputy dean for research and the RGMO.
- 3.3.9 The PI adhere to the principles and policies outlined in the University's Intellectual Property Policy and the Financial Conflict of Interest Policy.
- 3.3.10 The PI take responsibility for cooperating in the audit process, whether internal or external audit staff is involved.
- 3.3.11 The PI in collaboration with RGMO prepare and submit the final reports, which may include contributions by sub-awardees or collaborators.

4. ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

PI	Principal Investigator – A Principal Investigator is the primary individual responsible for the preparation, conduct, and administration of a grant, contract, or other sponsored project in compliance with applicable laws and regulations and institutional policy governing the conduct of sponsored research.
RGMO	Research Grants Management Office
LoS	Letter(s) of Support