



CONFERENCE FUND GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Botswana Open University (BOU) has established a Conference Fund to enable staff to present academic papers at local, regional and international academic conferences.
- 1.2 In order to ensure equitable usage of the Conference Fund and to optimize the quality of papers presented with institutional support, these Guidelines have been developed to inform the process of application and decision on grants from the Fund. Recommendations for funding are vested in the School/Institute/Centre Research Committees. Staff of the University who are not academic members of staff shall submit their application through the School whose disciplinary area is cognate to the topic of their proposed paper.
- 1.3 Decisions to award a conference grant are the prerogative of the Conference Fund Committee, which is a sub-committee of the University Research and Innovation Committee (URIC).

2. The Purpose of the Conference Fund

- 2.1 The Conference Fund is integral to the achievement of the commitment in the University Research and Innovation Policy to “develop and sustain an institutional culture that promotes active staff engagement in research and innovation”.
- 2.2 In particular, the Conference Fund is intended to:
 - 2.2.1 drive the research themes identified in the Research Strategy;
 - 2.2.2 provide incentives and support for the dissemination of research findings;
 - 2.2.3 foster collaborative research, especially where a senior member is mentoring a junior staff member;
 - 2.2.4 support the presentation of papers of high quality with potential for publication in national, regional and international journals of repute.

3. Role of the School/Institute/Centre Research Committee

- 3.1 Each School, Research Institute and Research Centre shall have a Research Committee. One function of this Committee is to make recommendations on the allocation of conference funds. The Research Committee is tasked with vetting all potential conference papers and making a recommendation, using the following process:
- 3.1.1 Receive applications with motivations, budgets and potential conference papers;
 - 3.1.2 Cause potential conference papers to be presented at a School/Institute/Research Centre seminar;
 - 3.1.3 Appoint a discussant to respond to the paper presentation at the School/Institute/Research Centre seminar;
 - 3.1.4 Make a recommendation and justification for funding having satisfied itself of the quality of the paper and the presentation.
- 3.2 The Committee will forward the application documentation and the minutes containing its recommendation to the Centre for Research and Innovation.

4. Role of the Conference Fund Committee

- 4.1 The Conference Fund Committee will be comprised of a representative of each School/Institute/Research Centre and will choose its own Chairperson. The Director, Centre for Research and Innovation shall be the Secretary. The Committee shall take decisions on recommendations received from the School/Institute/Research Centre Research Committees. Its decisions for the award of conference grants will be based on merit and the equitable allocation of funds.
- 4.2 The Committee's decision will be conveyed in a formal letter. Where a grant has been awarded, the letter will indicate the following:
- The amount granted
 - The obligations of the grantee (s)
 - The logistics of payment
 - The accounting procedures upon returning from the conference

5. Conditions for Conference Funding

In making its decisions, the Conference Fund Committee will take into account the conditions stipulated below:

- 5.1 Conference support will be subject to the availability of funds and may involve full funding or partial funding to supplement funding from an external source.
- 5.2 Preference will be given to papers that address the research themes identified in the BOU Research Strategy.
- 5.3 Funding will only be considered on the basis of a recommendation from the School/Institute/Research Centre Research Committee and evidence that the due process has been followed.
- 5.4 Both junior and senior members of staff will be eligible for conference support.

6. Coverage of Conference Funding

A conference grant will be made in accordance with BOU Financial Regulations and may cover all or some of the following:

- 6.1 Conference registration fee
- 6.2 Travel costs
- 6.3 Per diem
- 6.4 Visa costs
- 6.5 Conference-related activities

7. Application Motivation

An applicant's motivation for conference funding should include the following:

- 7.1 How the attendance will advance one's personal teaching and research programme.

- 7.2 How the attendance will advance the work of one's respective School/Institute/Research Centre and of BOU as an institution.
- 7.3 The conference sub-themes and activities that one intends to attend within the conference as well as one's own presentation.
- 7.4 The follow-up one will undertake at BOU after returning from the conference.
- 7.5 The plans the author (and co-authors) have for an eventual publication based on the paper.

8. Failure to Attend the Conference

Failure to attend the conference for whatever reasons should be indicated to the Centre for Research and Innovation immediately and the funds should be returned.

9. Upon Returning from the Conference

Upon returning from the Conference, grantees will be expected to:

- 9.1 Submit a conference report to the Centre for Research and Innovation, Dean/Director and Head of Department highlighting the major outcomes of their presentation, new knowledge gained, networking outcomes, publication plan and other follow-up activities.
- 9.2 Complete the financial form as provided for in BOU's Financial Regulations.

10. Review

These Guidelines will be reviewed every three years or earlier as necessary.