



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION POLICY

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| Approving Authority | Council |
| Date of Approval | 23 rd August 2018 |
| Version # | Final |
| Effective Date | 1 st September 2018 |
| Date last reviewed | |
| Revision date(s) | |
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| Document URL | |

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a part of the universal family of higher education providers, the Botswana Open University (BOU) is alert to the crucial role research and innovation plays in contributing to socio-economic development and to institutional self-transformation. In order to compete with other universities as a credible higher education provider, BOU recognizes the need to develop and sustain an institutional culture that promotes active staff engagement in research and innovation. The Botswana Open University is inspired by a desire to be a world class open and distance learning university that contributes to the global competitiveness of Botswana by providing knowledge and skills through open access to quality, innovative distance learning programmes and services. Research is pivotal to the attainment of this lofty goal.
- 1.2 This Policy is framed within the context of institutional and national developments that, in turn, have helped shape both the substance and focus of the Policy. At the national level there is a thrust for research as a result of the introduction of the Botswana National Research Science and Technology Plan (BNRST) in 2005, through which Government commits to providing competitive research funding for research initiatives undertaken in predefined strategic thematic areas that are aligned to Botswana's priority development challenges. In turn, the BNRST Plan requires the incorporation of the Plan's strategic objectives into all Government funded organisations involved in research. Additional to the BNRST Plan, the 2008 Tertiary Education Policy, *Towards a Knowledge Society*, requires all tertiary education institutions to develop institutional research agendas and establish appropriate mechanisms for promoting and managing research. Furthermore, the 2011 National Policy on Research, Science, Technology and Innovation and the 2017 Education Research and Innovation Policy Framework provide a strong national impetus for BOU to undertake research and innovation. It is envisaged that Vision 2036 and Agenda 2030 will provide a framework for thematic areas that will focus the institutional research agenda.
- 1.3 This Policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant BOU policy documents, including, the University Statutes, the Policy, Criteria and Procedures for the Promotion and Appointment of Academic Staff, the Research Ethics Policy and the Intellectual Property Policy. It is also linked to the University Research Information System and the Institutional Repository managed by the Department of Library and Information Services.

2. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy the following terms are used as defined:

2.1 *A Culture of Research* is a normative system within the Botswana Open University that places a great value on the ethical conduct and communication of scholarly research and innovation. It provides a context in which research and innovation activity is expected, discussed and valued.

2.2 *Academic staff*

Academic staff means personnel whose primary function includes teaching, curriculum development, preparation of learning materials, instructional design, programme delivery, assessment, quality assurance, student support, scholarship and research, and shall include such persons as may be designated or recognised for such purposes by Council on the recommendation of Senate.

2.3 *Innovation*

The implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations (OECD, 2005)

2.4 *Research*

Systematic scholarly or scientific investigation or inquiry that contributes to new knowledge or better understanding of phenomena with the potential for application that may lead to improved professional practice, inventions, creative works and other products and services.

2.4.1 *Applied Research* is the scientific study designed to solve practical problems rather than to gain knowledge for the sake of knowledge. It is meant to contribute to socio-economic advancement and improved professional practices and the development of innovative technologies.

2.4.2 *Pure or Basic Research*

A systematic scholarly investigation or analysis that focuses on gaining a better or more complete understanding in order to explain, predict and describe a subject, phenomenon, behaviour or a basic law of nature. It is often of an experimental or theoretical

nature and primarily undertaken to acquire new knowledge without looking for long-term benefits other than the advancement of knowledge.

3. PURPOSE

3.1 The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for the governance of research and innovation to:

- a. be used by staff, students and other researchers at the Botswana Open University to carry out their required research obligations;
- b. assist in providing a context for the development of a clear institutional research agenda and priorities that enhance the national and international profile and reputation of the University and its staff;
- c. promote the development of a sustainable research culture and enabling environment that encourage staff to conduct, manage, and publish scholarly research outputs;
- d. provide guidance for the mobilisation of research resources.

3.2 Rationale and Justification

Research and innovation are a core part of the Botswana Open University's mission and directly contribute to:

- a. enhancing teaching and learning by encouraging staff academic development that is directed at promoting research;
- b. extension of the frontiers of knowledge, competencies, skills, ingenuity and professional endeavours;
- c. community engagement that positively impacts socio-economic development through research-driven knowledge and technology transfer;
- d. promoting the profile, credibility, and reputation of the institution and its staff at both national and international levels.

3.3 Policy Objectives

The objectives of the Policy are to:

- a. promote a culture of research and innovation across the institution;
- b. increase the percentage of publication by academic staff in each School producing at least one publication annually;
- c. ensure that there is integration of staff research informing teaching and curriculum development;
- d. promote the mobilisation of research resources;
- e. provide guidance for promoting transparent and fair allocation and utilisation of research resources;
- f. develop structures and procedures for effective and efficient regulation, management, and utilisation of research resources;
- g. encourage and support both applied and basic research;
- h. encourage and support research in open distance and e-learning across academic fields.

4. SCOPE

This Policy covers all University research and innovation activities undertaken by researchers including staff, students and other researchers.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

5.1 The University shall invest in the development and promotion of an institutional research culture that values the conduct and communication of scholarship, research and innovation.

5.2 General Policy Statements

- a. All research and innovation activities undertaken at the Botswana Open University shall be designed to fulfil the University Vision, Mission and Values statements, and the national aspirations of Botswana.

- b. In establishing its research and innovation priorities, the University shall take into account national strategic goals and priorities established by the Human Resources Development Council, Vision 2036, Agenda 2030 and other relevant national and international bodies.
- c. In accordance with academic freedom provisions, all academic and other staff of the University shall be free to research any area, on condition that they are compliant with the University's Research Ethics Policy.
- d. The University shall apply strict disciplinary action to any researcher who violates the ethical principles and practices commonly upheld by the global community of scholars.
- e. All staff, students and other researchers have the right to carry out both applied and basic research and to engage in scholarly work and publish findings in all University-supported research in University approved outlets, as determined from time to time.
- f. All staff have the right to and are encouraged to seek research funds from the University Research Fund to support their research activities.
- g. Research that addresses the University's strategic research thematic areas shall take precedence in the allocation of University research resources.
- h. The University encourages and prioritizes collaborative research between staff and between institutions, especially when it creates opportunity for mentorship of nascent researchers.
- i. The University strongly encourages multidisciplinary research and shall prioritise funding of inter-school and inter-institutional research collaboration nationally and internationally that leads to sharing of expertise and techniques across disciplines and institutional boundaries.
- j. Academic staff are required to develop individual annual research and publication plans that are approved by their respective Heads of Department. It is the principal responsibility of each School to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate their respective research projects, while the Centre for Research and Innovation has overall oversight of research projects undertaken within the University.
- k. The University expects that all research outputs of its staff will be deposited in the Institutional Depository managed by the Department of Library and Information Services.

7. IMPLEMENTATION

- 7.1 Implementation of the Research and Innovation Policy is coordinated and managed by a number of bodies and committees. The roles and responsibilities are as follows:
- a. The Centre for Research and Innovation, provides the secretariat to the University Research and Innovation Committee and its subcommittees, manages the University Research Fund and provides research management services to the University.
 - b. The University's most senior research and innovation policy and coordination body is the University Research and Innovation Committee which develops research policies, oversees policy implementation and advises the Senate on all research-related matters.
 - c. Deans are required to establish School Research and Innovation Committees to support and coordinate School research and innovation activities and complement the work of the University Research and Innovation Committee.
 - d. Directors of Research Institutes and Centres are required to establish Institute or Centre Research and Innovation Committees to support and coordinate their research and innovation activities and complement the work of the University Research and Innovation Committee.

8. REVIEW

This Policy shall be reviewed after every three years or earlier as necessary.