Subject: Launching a Small Grants Program for Pilot-Scale Studies and Prototype Development

1. Background and Rationale

To enhance the research and innovation ecosystem in the university and to facilitate faculty members in generating preliminary data or developing functional prototypes, it is proposed to initiate a Small Grants Program under the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC). The purpose of this program is to support pilot-scale studies, prototype development and fine-tuning final year projects that can lead to:

i. Preparation of competitive proposals for extramural funding (national/international).
ii. Validation and scaling of innovative ideas or research outputs for commercialization.
iii. Bridging the gap between basic research and applied development.
iv. Enhancing the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of university innovations.
v. Empowering faculty-led innovation teams and promoting an entrepreneurial culture.

1.1. Objectives of the Program

i. To provide seed funding for faculty to conduct high-potential preliminary studies.
ii. To support proof-of-concept and prototype development for technologies with commercial or societal potential.
iii. To accelerate research translation from lab to market.
iv. To prepare faculty to respond to calls from national (e.g., NRPU, PSF, IGNITE) and international funding agencies with more refined proposals.

2. Governance and Implementation Mechanism

2.1. Scope and Priority Areas

The program will support projects across all disciplines offered at the university with special focus on:

i. Health and Allied Sciences
ii. Environmental Solutions
iii. Energy and Water Innovations
iv. ICT Applications
v. Biotechnology and Life Sciences

vi. Industrial Process Improvements

vii. Entrepreneurship/SMEs

viii. Any new area/priority may be included with the approval of the Rector on recommendation by the Internal Review Committee.

2.2. Eligibility Criteria

i. Full-time faculty members of the University.

ii. Collaborative proposals involving interdisciplinary teams may be encouraged.

iii. Applicant must not be currently availing another grant.

2.3. Grant Features

i. Grant Amount: Up to PKR 500,000 per project. A total of PKR 03.0 million may be allocated for this purpose

ii. Project Duration: 6 to 12 months.

iii. Expected Output: Proof of concept prototype/model, and policy recommendation.

iv. Matching Contribution: Not mandatory but encouraged where feasible.

v. Potential partners may include the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), Pakistan Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (PCSIR), Chambers of Commerce, and private sector organizations etc.
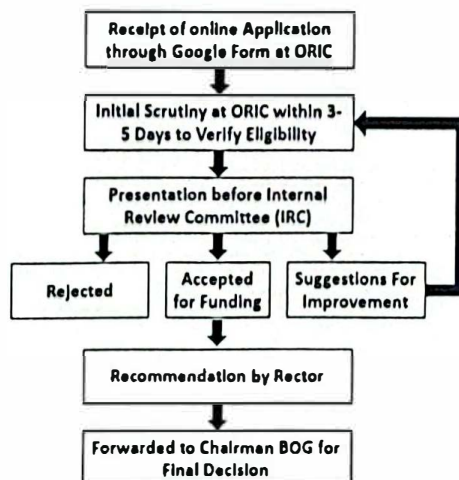
2.4. Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by the Internal Review Committee (IRC) comprising the following:

i. Director ORIC

ii. Dean of the relevant Faculty

iii. Registrar

Moreover, the selection criteria will be based on:

i. Scientific/Technical merit/prototype

ii. Innovation potential/uniqueness

iii. Feasibility/methodology/do-ability

iv. Prospects for external funding/commercialization/up scaling

v. Capacity of the research team

vi. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

vii. Timeline/Ghent Chart

To further illustrate the governance and implementation mechanism of the ORIC Small Grants Program, the process flow is presented below:

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Receipt of online Application │
│ through Google Form at ORIC │
└─────────────────────────┘
            ↓
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Initial Scrutiny at ORIC within 3- │ ←───┐
│ 5 Days to Verify Eligibility │     │
└─────────────────────────┘     │
            ↓                   │
┌─────────────────────────┐     │
│ Presentation before Internal │     │
│ Review Committee (IRC) │     │
└─────────────────────────┘     │
     ↓        ↓        ↓         │
┌────────┐ ┌────────┐ ┌────────────┐│
│Rejected│ │Accepted│ │Suggestions For ││
│        │ │for Funding│ │Improvement │┘
└────────┘ └────────┘ └────────────┘
              ↓
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Recommendation by Rector │
└─────────────────────────┘
              ↓
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Forwarded to Chairman BOG for │
│ Final Decision │
└─────────────────────────┘
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2.5. Monitoring and Reporting

i. Director ORIC will notify a monitoring committee comprising a representative from ORIC, Finance, and a relevant technical external expert from relevant company/industry after approval of the Rector.

ii. The committee will evaluate the performance after every quarter in line with the KPIs and timeline

iii. Mid-term progress and final completion reports will be mandatory.

iv. Successful grantees will be required to present outcomes in ORIC's Innovation Showcases or Research Seminars.

v. ORIC will provide facilitation in linking outcomes to relevant funding calls or industry partners.

3. Funding Mechanism and Oversight

i. ORIC proposes an annual budget of PKR 03.0 million to be allocated for this program from internal university resources.

ii. A Program Oversight Committee consisting of the Director ORIC, Registrar, and Manager Finance will be constituted to monitor disbursement, performance and impact.

iii. The Internal Review Committee will determine the funds release mechanism considering project needs. Amount is to be dispersed in stages.

iv. The awardee will have to sign an agreement to complete the project.

4. Expected Outcomes and Benefits

i. Promotion and development of marketable prototypes or technologies.

ii. Enhanced faculty engagement in applied research, innovation, and policy recommendations.

iii. Strengthened university profile in commercialization and societal impact through increased chances of negotiations with relevant stakeholders.

iv. Better positioning for funding from donors and the government.

Note: This policy is valid from October 08, 2025