

RESEARCH POLICY

Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan

KGUMSB Research Policy, 2024 (v1.0)



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PREFACE:

This policy document is the official document of the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB) to serve as a policy and procedural guide and reference source for the research of KGUMSB. This policy is visioned to ensure ethical conduct of research by the health professionals, academic and non-academic staff and overall management of the research activities within the University.

The policies outlined herein shall supersede all research policies and guidelines established by the faculties and affiliated institutes. However, these policies shall not supersede any laws, policies, or regulations set by the RGoB or other lawfully appointed agencies in the country.

The staff (teaching and non-teaching) and students are mandated to follow this policy document to ensure information necessary to carry out their job functions and responsibilities related to research.

The Research Policy is a living document and shall be updated when deemed necessary to accommodate the evolving needs and changes.



Dr. Kinzang P. Tshering
PRESIDENT

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Abbreviations

Acronym	Definition/Full-form
BHJ	Bhutan Health Journal
BSJ	Bhutan Sorig Journal
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CoS	Condition of Services
CRSC	CPD & Research Steering Committee
FoPGM	Faculty of Postgraduate Medicine
FNPH	Faculty of Nursing & Public Health
FoTM	Faculty of Traditional Medicine
FoUGM	Faculty of Undergraduate Medicine
GC	The Governing Council
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KGUMSB	Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan
MECRIT	Medical Education Centre for Research, Innovation & Training
MoH	Ministry of Health
NMS	National Medical Services
PPD	Policy & Planning Division
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
UMSB Act	University of Medical Sciences Act of Bhutan

1. Introduction



Section 1

– Introduction

The Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Science of Bhutan (KGUMSB, *hereafter referred to as the “University”*) was established in 2013 under the University of Medical Sciences Act of Bhutan (UMSB) 2012. The University is tasked with serving as an “overarching university for existing institutions engaged in medical and healthcare education and training programs in the country and for new institutions established hereinafter.” (Chapter 2, Clause 4, UMSB Act).

Since its inception, the University has played a pivotal role in developing health human resources to enhance the quality of healthcare delivery in Bhutan. Additionally, the University has become a hub for a knowledge-based society, engaging in teaching, learning, and research activities that serve not only Bhutanese needs but also contribute to the global knowledge bank.

The medical university strives to create and offer opportunities to develop research culture based on the latest principles and specific health needs through establishment of the Medical Education Centre for Research, Innovation and Training (MECRIT), Institutional Review Board (IRB), Bhutan Health Journal (BHJ) and Bhutan Sorig Journal (BSJ). All these units and agencies have specific roles in the development of research processes and culture.

Furthermore, a strong and robust research culture is essential to fulfill University’s ambition of producing medical and health professionals who embody not only compassion, wisdom, values, and traditions of Bhutan’s unique healthcare systems, but also foster equal importance to both traditional and allopathic medicine through evidence based practice.

In line with the vision and mission statements of the organization, strong emphasis is placed on academic, applied and operational research. Faculty members are encouraged to actively contribute to the attainment of the University's research goals. This is integral to the primary roles in teaching and other supportive activities aligned with the University's values and objectives.

The University also recognizes the significance of faculty participation in external activities, including government-funded and private initiatives, which extend beyond the campus. Such involvement in academic, professional, public service, and consulting endeavors is not only appropriate but often desirable, contributing to the broader research and collaboration objectives of KGUMSB.

To support and mainstream research activities within the University, putting in place research policy and guidelines with appropriate governance structures are necessary. The KGUMSB's Research Policy shall function as a guiding document for the conduct of research by both staff (academic and non-academic), students and individuals or agencies outside University for the overall research activity management within the University.

1.1 Vision

"A center of excellence in medical and health research"

1.2 Mission

- To promote research culture in medical and health sciences both within and outside the university.
- To contribute to the development of national health systems and the global scientific community through evidence-based health policies & practices.
- To establish systems and standards for the ethical conduct of biomedical research and innovation in compliance with the best global practices.

1.3 Scope

This policy shall apply to all the individuals or agencies engaged in research activities within the University including staff, students and external collaborators.

2. Research Governance and Structure



Section 2

– *Research governance & structure*

SECTION:

2.1

Research at the University shall occur within the context of administrative structures serving a variety of purposes such as governance and management, setting and enforcement of standards, ensuring integrity, quality, credibility and community trust in the research undertaking, while providing support to researchers.

2.2

The Governing Council (GC) as the supreme governing body of the KGUMSB shall lay down policies and provide directions to efficiently carry out the research activities and programs in the University.

2.3

The GC shall delegate the management of research programs and activities to the MECRIT, Office of the President.

2.4

The MECRIT shall provide the linkage between the Academic Board's policies and the research activities occurring at individual Faculties and affiliated faculties.

2.5

The MECRIT shall institute a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and Research Steering Committee (CRSC) to provide policy and administrative guidance related to research in the university.

2.6

The MECRIT shall prepare University's research plan, identify sources of funding for research, make proposal, advise on establishment of links with other universities and research bodies.

2.7

The Academic Board as the primary academic authority shall be responsible not only for academic standards but also responsible for research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University.

2.8

The MECRIT shall monitor the quality of research within the University and affiliated institutes.

2.9

The IRB shall be the highest authority to approve, exempt, disapprove, monitor and require modifications in all research activities that fall within its jurisdiction.

2.10

To enhance the sustainability of the IRB, a fee structure shall be implemented for the review of each protocol. These fees shall directly contribute to covering the operational expenses of the IRB, including providing fair and appropriate remuneration for members in recognition of their expertise and time dedicated to the review process.

2.11

IRB shall aspire and strive to be the national ethics committee/board to mainstream research culture, processes and practices.

2.12

The University shall ensure highest ethical standards to assure responsible conduct of research involving human participants, and review on a regular basis.

2.13

The peer review journals under the University shall publish quality scholarly articles, maintain transparency in the publishing process and safeguard research integrity as per the prescribed international best practice in Medical Journals and publication ethics.

3. Research Funding and Resources



Section 3

– *Research funding & resources*

SECTION:

3.1

The Royal Government of Bhutan shall prioritize medical and health research by allocating resources and funds to the University for these activities.

3.2

Additionally, University shall mobilize resources from fees generated through conferences and symposiums, research grants, research consultancy services, grants from developmental partners and philanthropic contributions.

3.3

Resources shall be mobilized beyond the annual budget allocation to support research activities, up to 5% of the total annual budget.

3.4

University shall levy overhead cost/fees on grants to compensate administrative cost and for use of university amenities including university brand as per the Business Strategy of the University.

3.5

University shall have a business strategy for the mobilization of resources, sustenance and self-sufficiency of the university.

3.6

University shall develop a system to promote and enhance the research culture at the University by instituting appropriate remuneration and incentive packages in accordance with Condition of Services (CoS) 2018 and other prevailing financial norms in the country.

3.7

The University shall actively facilitate collaborations between researchers within the University and with researchers external to it. Collaboration with an external researcher shall adhere to the rules and regulations of both the University and the collaborating institution.

3.8

Researchers shall advocate and practice the judicious use of resources belonging to the public, employers or clients. The researchers shall comply with the financial management rules, including fund flow and reporting, as per the existing Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) regulation and other sponsoring bodies.

4. Research Capacity Building



Section 4

– *Research capacity building*

SECTION:

4.1 Stakeholders

4.1.1

MECRIT along with the policy and planning division, shall serve as the primary unit within the University to organize, coordinate, and promote research capacity-building initiatives.

4.1.2

Additional support shall be provided by the respective faculties/institutes particularly the research unit, to ensure effective support and coordination at the faculty/institute level.

4.2 Training Programs

4.2.1

MECRIT shall be responsible for proposing annual action plans in research capacity development at the University. These activities shall include, but are not limited to, workshops, symposiums, trainings, conferences, research mentorship and research modules as appropriate. This also aligns with the requirements for faculty appointments and promotions as prescribed in the *University's Condition of Services, 2024, promotion for the academic staff*.

4.2.2

Research capacity development shall also be promoted within academic programs through initiatives such as thesis projects, small-scale project design, incorporation of research competencies into various curricula at KGUMSB.

4.2.3

The University shall institute a faculty mentorship program in the field of research, where a senior staff mentor shall support and develop research competencies in junior staff.

4.3 Collaborations

4.3.1

The MECRIT shall maintain and expand a pool of local and international researchers to facilitate grant writing workshops and grant submission where University faculty and staff can participate as team members and learn from local and international experts on various aspects of research.

4.3.2

All research collaborations within the University shall be coordinated through the respective research units at the institutes (both affiliated institutes and faculties) to ensure transparency and engage the appropriate staff for any given research project or capacity development initiative.

4.3.3

The University shall collaborate with the Ministry of Health (MoH), teaching hospitals under National Medical Services (NMS) and international partners to identify the research training needs and capacity development of health professionals in the country.

5. Research Priority Setting



Section 5

– *Research priority setting*

SECTION:

5.1 National priority

5.1.1

The University shall align its research priorities with those set by the Policy and Planning Division (PPD) of the Ministry of Health. These priorities may be adjusted periodically in response to emerging health needs and challenges.

5.2 International Health Development priority

5.2.1

The University shall mandate the institutes to actively seek competitive opportunities with international funding agencies in line with its vision and the research needs. This strategy is crucial for reducing dependency on public funding, ensuring sustainability, and fostering a robust research culture at the University.

5.2.2

The University and institutes shall adhere to national norms to ensure that national interests are always protected in all collaborative research undertakings.

5.3 Academic program related priority

5.3.1

All the institutes of KGUMSB shall identify priority research areas in both allopathic and traditional medicine for health system development in the country.

5.3.2

The University shall offer higher degrees by research (Masters or PhDs but not limited) to ensure research studies are conducted in these priority areas or emerging priorities areas. This shall result in translation into good clinical practice and the generation of local evidence. Additionally, University staff shall utilize the priority list to plan their research work.

5.4 Identification of niche areas and centers of excellence

5.4.1

The University shall develop a systematic approach and metrics to ensure that each institute, namely, the Faculty of Postgraduate Medicine (FoPGM), Faculty of Traditional Medicine (FoTM), Faculty of Nursing and Public Health (FNPH), and Faculty of Undergraduate Medicine (FoUGM) – identifies at least one niche research area or theme periodically.

5.4.2

Each institute shall apply for competitive grants to establish centers of excellence accordingly. These centers shall serve as the hubs of research to fulfill the aspiration of self-sustaining and branding of the University.

5.4.3

The niche areas shall be revisited periodically based on national, international, community and University priorities.

6. Publication and Dissemination



Section 6

– Publication & dissemination

SECTION:

6.1 Publication support

6.1.1

The University shall support all students and staff in publishing their research works and projects through various means and strategies.

6.1.2

The University shall promote the development of both the Bhutan Health Journal and the Bhutan Sorig Journal through robust capacity building, indexing with repository agencies and digitization of the Journals.

6.1.3

The support for publication shall be in the form of facilitating or supporting letters or article processing fees where possible to publish in reputable journals both domestically and internationally.

6.1.4

The university shall offer support document and policy clearances to any researcher for funding opportunities.

6.2 Conferences and Seminars

6.2.1

The University shall assist all the researchers in disseminating research findings by facilitation and fee support.

6.2.2

The University shall support dissemination platforms by organizing national and international conferences, technical seminars, and symposiums for presenting research work.

6.2.3

The University shall offer fee waivers or financial support for international conferences held outside the country wherever possible.

7. Code of Conduct, Ethics and Integrity



Section 7

– Code of conduct, ethics & integrity

SECTION:

7.1

All researchers shall adhere to institutional policies, code of conduct, regulatory requirements and standard ethical principles throughout the research process, including assurance of good stewardship of public resources used to conduct research.

7.2

All researches or studies conducted under the auspices of KGUMSB and/or using the university name shall be conducted with adherence to the standard ethical principles, ensuring integrity, quality and credibility, thereby fostering a culture of trust and respect.

7.3

Primary investigators or researchers shall ensure honesty in all aspects of research, including data collection, analysis, reporting, and dissemination. Misrepresentation, fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism shall be strictly prohibited.

7.4

All researchers must be accountable and transparent about their methodologies, data sources, funding, and potential conflicts of interest. Research findings should

be accessible and reproducible where appropriate, while respecting intellectual property rights.

7.5

All researchers shall respect the dignity, rights, and welfare of all research participants, while giving appropriate consideration to the needs of minority groups or vulnerable people. This includes obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and protecting participants from harm.

7.6

All researchers shall ensure recognition of spiritual, traditional and cultural values and practices of different ethnic or regional groups to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them. This includes valuing and respecting the diversity, inclusiveness, heritage, knowledge, cultural property and connection to regional groups or ethnicity.

7.7

All Researchers shall appropriately reference and cite the work of others while giving credit, authorship and acknowledgment where appropriate, to those who have contributed to the research, including peer review, and publication practices.

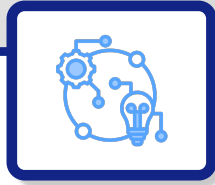
7.8

Researchers shall promote open and respectful collaboration. Researchers should share data responsibly, respecting participants' privacy and consent agreements.

7.9

Any suspected research misconduct shall be reported to the relevant authority or the IRB, KGUMSB. Allegations of misconduct shall be investigated promptly and impartially by a competent body/agency, while protecting whistle-blowers from any consequences of retaliation.

8. Implementation Framework



Section 8

– Implementation framework

SECTION:

8.1

The University shall mandate MECRIT as the nodal office to be responsible for implementation of this Research Policy.

8.2

The realization of this Policy shall be supported by other policy instruments and regulations such as condition of services, University strategic document and five year plan of the University.

8.3

The annual work plans of the relevant sectors and institutes shall play a key instrument in implementing the University's Research Policy. This shall be done through a synergized approach and harmonized action among the various faculties/institutes and units within the University and other stakeholders.

9. Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Evaluation



Section 9

– Quality assurance and M&E

SECTION:

9.1

The institutes and researchers engaged in any research shall maintain performance metrics for periodic review and feedback by the CRSC for quality assurance.

9.2

MECRIT shall periodically monitor and evaluate the University's research standards to assess the impact of research activities.

9.3

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University shall function as an oversight body for any ethical or scientific deviation in research proposals particularly when there are changes to protocols involving human or animal subjects.

10. Assumption



Section 10

– *Assumptions*

The following are the key assumptions of this policy and its successful implementation:

1. There is support from major players like the government and other stakeholders in terms of finance and other resources.
2. Robust research culture and capacity development in place.
3. Adequate research infrastructure such as digital & IT resources and library in place.
4. Focused effort on research priority areas development.
5. Adequate research collaboration at both national and international level.
6. Leadership and a clear line of accountability is recognized.
7. Robust monitoring and evaluation framework implemented.

11. Drafting and Reviewing Team



Section 11

– Drafting & reviewing teams

11.1 Drafting Team [24 -28th June 2024]

1. Mr. Rixin Jamtsho, Director, MECRIT
2. Dr. Karma Tenzin, Associate Professor, FoUGM
3. Mr. Tashi Norbu, Chief Program Officer, CPD, MECRIT
4. Mr. Tshering JAMTSHO, Research Officer, RID, MECRIT
5. Mr. Sonam Phuntsho, Sr. Planning Officer, OOP
6. Mr. Cheku Wangchuk, Administrative Assistant, MECRIT
7. Ms. Tshewang Lhamo, Administrative Assistant, MECRIT

11.2 Reviewing Team [28th June - 05th July, 2024]

1. Dr. Kinzang P Tshering, Hon'ble President, KGUMSB
2. Dr. Kuenzang Chhenzom, Registrar, OOP, KGUMSB
3. Mr. Sonam Dorji, Director, HR & Planning, OOP, KGUMSB
4. Dr. Guru Prasad Dhakal, Dean, FoPGM, KGUMSB
5. Drungtsho Sangay Wangdi, Dean, FoTM, KGUMSB
6. Mr. Nima Sangay, Dean, FNPH, KGUMSB

7. Dr. Gyem Dorji, Dean, FoUGM, KGUMSB
8. Mr. Tashi Penjor, Chief Planning Officer, PPD, MoH
9. Mr. Mongal Singh Gurung, Dy. Chief Research Officer, MoH

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