	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page	
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	1 / 10	

Introduction to Guideline for Research Projects (RPs)

This document is a guideline for the preparation of applications and for the implementation of internal and external Research Projects at EPOKA University.

This document has been prepared by the Research and Projects Office (RPO) and approved by Rectorate of EPOKA University.

The objective of this document is to provide support for internal and external RPs at EPOKA University in compliance with;

1. [The European Research Area \(ERA\) priorities for excellence in research;](#)
2. [The provisions of the Law no. 80/2015 “On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education in the Republic of Albania”;](#)
3. [National Strategy on Science, Technology and Innovation;](#)
4. [Institutional Framework Strategy 2018-2022 of EPOKA University;](#)
5. [Strategic Plan of the Research and Projects Office 2018-2022;](#)
6. [Strategic Plans of the Center for European Studies \(CES\), Center of Research and Design in Applied Sciences \(CORDA\), Continuous Education Center \(CEC\), Yunus Center for Social Business and Sustainability \(YCSBS\);](#)
7. Research Areas of the respective Departments.
 - [Civil Engineering](#)
 - [Computer Engineering](#)
 - [Architecture](#)
 - [Economics](#)
 - [Business Administration](#)
 - [Banking and Finance](#)
 - [Political Science and International Relations](#)
 - [Law](#)

INTERNAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Applicant Eligibility


a) The following staff members are eligible to apply for Internal RPs;

- ✓ Full-time academic staff members of EPOKA University holding at least a Master of Science or equivalent degree.
- ✓ Members of a research centre at EPOKA University holding at least a Master of Science or equivalent degree.
- ✓ Assisting full time academic staff members holding at least a Master of Science or equivalent degree.
- ✓ PhD students of EPOKA University.

b) The Rectorate has the right to define new criteria through a Rectorate decision before the announcement of every new call for RPs.

c) If new criteria are not defined by the Rectorate, the eligibility criteria listed in this document are applied.

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	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
	Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	2 / 10	

2. Criteria

a) Upon submission, Research Project proposals should include:

- ✓ Executive Summary
- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Aims and Objectives
- ✓ Literature Review
- ✓ Methodology
- ✓ Research Work Plan/Activity Programme
- ✓ Expected Impact
- ✓ Proposed Budget
- ✓ Reporting/Dissemination Plan

b) RPs are not eligible for consideration if they are:

- ✓ lacking in originality, authenticity and integrity,
- ✓ fully or partially funded by another source,
- ✓ not consistent with the strategies which are defined in the introduction of this document.

3. Budget Allocation


a) RPs budget can be allocated in the following categories:

- ✓ **Administration Costs** (honorary for the management or coordination of the project);
- ✓ **Equipment and Material Costs** (electrical or laboratorial material needed to deliver the project);
- ✓ **Overheads** (translation, proof reading, clerical material and other related costs)
- ✓ **Mobility Costs** (travel and living expenses related to the projects);
- ✓ **Dissemination Costs** (brochures, leaflets and printed materials concerning the implementation of the project);
- ✓ **Publication Costs** (Journal publication, Book publication etc. that represent the intellectual outputs of the project).

b) Maximum percentages of eligible budget headings of RPs are described in the following table:

Budget Headings	Maximum Allocation
Administration Costs	Can be up to 10%
Equipment and Material Costs	Can be up to 70%
Overheads (translation, proof reading, and other related costs)	Can be up to 10 %

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	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page	
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	3 / 10	


Mobility Costs (travel, food, accommodation and other living expenses)	<i>Can be up to 50%</i>
Dissemination Costs	<i>Can be up to 20 %</i>
Publication Costs	<i>Can be up to 50%</i>

4. Submission and Evaluation

Internal projects

- ✓ Internal RPs shall be submitted to the RPO through the online platform on EPOKA Interactive System (EIS) at the prescribed date set by the Office. The RPO will propose the assignment of at least three reviewers or experts in the respective field of study that will evaluate the projects from the list of experts provided at the beginning of each academic year by the Faculties and Research Centers. The assignment of the said reviewers or experts will be approved by the Rectorate.
- ✓ The RPO evaluates and lists the projects according to the quantified [Evaluation Forms](#) of experts and submits it to the Rector's Office. If deemed necessary, the Rectorate establishes a Commission composed of at least three members of each Faculty under the chairmanship of the Vice Rector or Rector to propose the list of projects to be financed by the University budget.
- ✓ A threshold score of 70 points out of 100 is set as a criterion for the project to be considered eligible for funding.
- ✓ The above-mentioned Commission decides which of the requested budget headings of the eligible projects can be funded by the Research and Projects Grants Scheme of EPOKA University.
- ✓ Projects are then presented to the Rector's Office for final approval. Afterwards, applicants are informed accordingly through the RPO.
- ✓ A Grant Agreement shall be signed between the Rector of EPOKA University and the respective Project Coordinators for their rights and obligations stemming from the project implementation.
- ✓ The Project Coordinator shall prepare every six months a [Progress Report](#) for the projects which are supported by the University budget and this report shall be submitted and presented to the RPO.
- ✓ In case Progress Reports are not submitted, the RPO freezes the next budget disbursement.
- ✓ If the RPO deems necessary, an ad-hoc commission may be requested for specific Internal RPs reporting.

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate

	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page	
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	4 / 10	

- ✓ A [Final Reporting Form](#) shall be filled in and delivered to the RPO together with all the other intellectual outputs of the project upon completion of the Internal RPs.

5. Financial Transactions

- ✓ The conduct of payments regarding any kind of incurred spendings under the assigned budget headings within the scope of the project, will be performed as follows; The Project Coordinator fills in a Budget [Disbursement Request Form](#) together with the supporting documents and submits to the RPO, and the latter sends a request for disbursement to the Office of the Administrator and upon approval, the decision of the Office of the Administrator is executed by the Finance Office of EPOKA University.
- ✓ The project expenses shall comply with the approved and allocated budget headings.
- ✓ The project revenues are recorded in compliance with the relevant legislation, documented and monitored in a separate account for each project by the Finance Office. The Project Coordinator is obliged to submit the required documents to the RPO and the Finance Office.
- ✓ EPOKA University reserves % 40 of the total allocated budget for each project until all requirements and commitments are fulfilled and finalized by the Project Coordinator based on the delivered Progress Reports of the project.
- ✓ In case of the termination of the PhD studies of the PhD student who acts as a Project Coordinator; or in case the project is not finalized on time; or in case any irregularities during the project implementation have been found as a result of an investigation, the Rectorate has the right to terminate the project.

6. Acknowledgment


Any Intellectual Output (Paper, Book, Book Chapter publication etc.) from the project shall explicitly state the financial support received from EPOKA University under the Research and Projects Grant Scheme of EPOKA University.

7. Dissemination

Every project proposal shall demonstrate how the project results will be disseminated to the relevant target groups.

- ✓ Every Project Activity and Output shall be disseminated through EPOKA University and Research and Projects Office websites;
- ✓ Every Project Activity shall be disseminated through EPOKA University official social media pages;

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate

	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
	Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	5 / 10	

- ✓ Every dissemination activity shall clearly state the financial support received from EPOKA University under the Research and Projects Grant Scheme of EPOKA University.

8. Priority

Priority will be given to projects that:

- ✓ are in line with the research strategies of EPOKA University, departments and research centers;
- ✓ engage more faculty staff and students;
- ✓ have an impact on society;
- ✓ promote the University at the regional and international level through its impact and publications.

9. Ethics Statement

Scientific fraud and misconduct are not condoned at any level of research or competition. This includes plagiarism, forgery, use or presentation of other researcher's work as one's own and fabrication of data.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Eligibility


All EPOKA University academic, assisting academic and administrative staff members, Faculties, Departments, Research Centers and Offices are encouraged to engage in externally funded projects that add value to the research and projects capacity of EPOKA University.

2. Project Application Criteria

For Project Applications which are partially or fully supported by external financial sources:

- ✓ It is important that before becoming part of the project consortia or in case EPOKA University is a leading institution - before submitting to the relevant institutions, the suitability of the project in terms of University principles and strategic goals be checked. This compliance check is carried on through the RPO.
- ✓ After the approval of the Rectorate, the staff engaged can become part of the project consortium on behalf of EPOKA University or in case EPOKA University is a leading institution, the project application can be carried out.

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate

	EPOKA UNIVERSITY			
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS			
Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	6 / 10


- ✓ For every project proposal, a Working Group shall be established through the decision of the Rectorate. In this framework, the RPO proposes the Working Group members in accordance with the broader and specific objectives of the project proposal. Based on the proposal of the RPO, the composition of the Working Group is approved or amended by the Rectorate.
- ✓ If deemed necessary, the Working Group members are subject to replacement only by the decision of the Rectorate.
- ✓ Each external project application should be submitted first to the RPO for initial evaluation and archiving as outgoing/incoming project and afterwards, the RPO submits it to the Rector's Office.

3. Project Implementation

Successful Project Implementation stands for achieving all the project goals and objectives while honoring all internal procedures and project protocols.

- ✓ Project Coordinators or Heads of Working Groups are responsible for the successful conduct of project activities in terms of research, training, teaching, capacity building, mobilities and reporting.
- ✓ For any study visit/teaching/training mobility foreseen in the framework of the project, the Project Coordinator submits to the RPO the proposal on the staff to participate in the study visit/teaching/training mobility. The RPO conveys the proposal to the Rector's Office, and the respective decision of the Rectorate is taken regarding participation of staff members in the said activities.
- ✓ In order to ensure the proper and smooth conduct of project implementation, a representative from the RPO shall attend at least one Project Management Meeting per year for every ongoing project.
- ✓ If any irregularities concerning the conduct of project implementation are found, the Rector's Office launches an investigation in compliance with the legal framework in force.
- ✓ Unless it is otherwise provided in the approved project or the signed contract, all the tools, equipment, devices, hardware and other materials which are purchased for the project become part of the EPOKA University inventory.
- ✓ For every externally funded project all the original documents related to the respective projects are kept in the RPO archive.
- ✓ All EPOKA University offices or staff involved in the project implementation shall deliver all original invoices to the RPO within five (5) days of invoice issuance.

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate

	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
	Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	7 / 10	

- ✓ For non-individual payments, or payments to third parties outside EPOKA University in the framework of ongoing projects, the Finance Office shall deliver to the RPO the bank statements for the payments done within five (5) working days after the payment has been finalized.

4. Project Mobility

Project mobility can be carried out for project management meetings, teaching, training purposes or in the form of study visits.


- ✓ Before every mobility takes place, a meeting with the RPO shall be arranged.
- ✓ For every mobility in the framework of a project, within five (5) working days after the mobility takes place, each participant shall submit the original supporting documents and one copy of every supporting document to the RPO.
- ✓ Among the documents to be delivered (subject to change based on the Grant Programme) are:
 - ✓ Narrative Report
 - ✓ Individual Travel Report
 - ✓ Travel Expense Report
 - ✓ Rectorate Decision
 - ✓ Passport
 - ✓ Airplane Ticket
 - ✓ Boarding Pass
 - ✓ Hotel Invoice
 - ✓ Agenda of the activity
 - ✓ Attendance list for every day of the activity
 - ✓ Other Supporting Documents deemed necessary
- ✓ In case of pre-payment for the mobility, bank statements shall be delivered together with the other supporting documents stated above.

5. Financial Regulations

The remuneration of the staff involved in the implementation of the project is conducted based on the budget lines/headings foreseen in the project grant agreement.

- ✓ In any case the 'Rule governing the engagement of staff in external national and international projects' approved by the Decision of the Administrative Board of EPOKA University No.2, dated 17.05.2016 applies.

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate

	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
	Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	8 / 10	


- ✓ For every remuneration that the engaged staff receives, a bank statement for the received payment shall be delivered to the Project Coordinator and the RPO within five (5) working days after the disbursement.
- ✓ In case the bank statement is not submitted by the respective staff member, the next remuneration is withheld until the submission of the said bank statement.
- ✓ Financial remuneration is not to be finalized unless all needed supporting documents have been delivered to the RPO, which accordingly submits a request for remuneration to the Office of the Administrator.

6. Project Reporting

Reporting on the project's progress and achievements is crucial and a beneficial part of the project's successful implementation process.

- ✓ The Project Coordinator shall deliver to the RPO the full folder of the project prior to signing the Grant Agreement with the project leading institution including: the detailed project description; the overall budget of the project; and a detailed overall table of incoming and outgoing mobilities to be conducted in the framework of the project.
- ✓ The Project Coordinator shall prepare every six months during the project duration a progress report which will be submitted and presented to the RPO. The report shall include,
 - A Gantt Chart (Timeline) about the project activities and outputs covered until the reporting time and the foreseen activities and outputs for the forthcoming period including staff involved;
 - A detailed table of incoming and outgoing mobilities covered until that moment and the foreseen mobilities for the next period (annual);
 - Detailed budget headings in terms of Staff Costs, Travel Costs and Costs of Stay, Equipment, Subcontracting, Co-finance.
- ✓ In case the six-months report is not delivered on time, the budget disbursements for the next six months period are withheld.
- ✓ If the RPO deems necessary, an ad-hoc commission may be requested for the ongoing project periodical reporting.
- ✓ In case the project fails to achieve the envisaged developments, or two interim reports have not been submitted or if the Project Coordinator leaves the project or finally, in case it is determined that the financial resources were misused, the project can be stopped, and another coordinator be assigned by the decision of the Rectorate.

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate

	EPOKA UNIVERSITY				
	GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS				
	Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	9 / 10	

7. Acknowledgment & Dissemination

Any output resulting from the project, made jointly or individually, including any activity, any information or promotional materials shall clearly indicate the source of funding by showing a disclaimer and the logo of the grant programme.

- ✓ Every Project Activity and Output shall be disseminated through EPOKA University and the RPO websites;
- ✓ Every Project Activity shall be disseminated through EPOKA University official social media pages;
- ✓ Large target groups are preferred

8. Priority

Priority will be given to projects that:

- ✓ are in line with the national research areas and strategies as well as those of the university, departments and research centers;
- ✓ engage more faculty staff and students;
- ✓ have an impact on society;
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Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
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EPOKA UNIVERSITY
GUIDELINE FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Document Code	Publication Date	Amendment No.	Amendment Date	Page/Total Page
EU-GDL-001-EN	12.01.2015	002	14.05.2019	10 / 10

Drafting Unit	Controlling Unit	Approving Unit
Research and Projects Office	Institutional and Legal Affairs Office	Rectorate