



## MZUZU UNIVERSITY

### RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY POLICY SUMMARY

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Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for this policy	Director of Research
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Approved by	Mzuzu University Council

## 1. BACKGROUND

This document is a Mzuzu University Research and Consultancy Policy (MZUNIRCP 2021) which will guide the university research and consultancy governance, capacity building, financing, knowledge management which involves dissemination and utilization of research output.

## 2. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Universities the world over are responsible for research, knowledge generation, scholarship and innovation. Globally, universities are facing renewed external and internal pressure as the push for them to meet the changing needs of society intensifies as a result of trends in the transition towards a knowledge-based economy; massification of higher education; and the integration and assimilation of Information Technology (IT) into the academic environment.

There is an urgent need to conduct high quality research in Malawi in order to generate evidence required to effectively inform the development of various sectors and related policies and interventions. The challenge, however, is that current research efforts in Malawi are highly fragmented, underfunded, donor driven and characterised by duplication. Over the years, there have been efforts promoted by the National Commission of Science and

Most studies that are conducted in Malawi do not contribute towards addressing national priorities as defined in various public policy frameworks, strategies etc., hence, very little research findings tend to inform policy and programming. The current research environment is characterised by the haphazard implementation of research mainly due to lack of a national research agenda.

## 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE POLICY

The following principles shall guide the implementation of the MZUNIRCP 2021:

- **Alignment with national priorities:** All research conducted by staff shall be aligned with national research priorities as detailed in the Malawi Agenda 2063, MGDS III, HSSP II, NHRA, NFARA, NANSRA and other national policies and strategies.
- **Ethical and scientific soundness:** Research shall adhere to the national ethics guidelines as developed and approved by the NCST which are in line with international standards. The research shall also be of high scientific quality.
- **Collaboration and coordination:** This policy shall promote collaborative research conducted by researchers from different disciplines, from various

sectors as well as by both local and external collaborators. The policy will also ensure that there is proper coordination among researchers in order to avoid fragmentation and reduce duplication of research efforts.

- **Translation to policy and programming:** The results of research shall be widely disseminated and efforts shall be made to ensure that these results inform policy and programming.
- **Equity:** The policy advocates commitment to addressing the problems of the vulnerable population groups and ensures that the benefits accruing from research are accessible to them irrespective of age, sex, residence, disability and religion.
- **Research group:** Members will be encouraged to form research working groups to respond to a particular theme

#### 4. LINKAGES WITH OTHER POLICIES

This Policy is developed to support realisation of several national policies through provision of evidence based policy directions. The national policies include Malawi 2063, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III, the National Education Sector Investment Plan (NESIP) 2020, the National Intellectual Property Policy (2019), the National Science and Technology Policy (2004), the Industrial Policy (2016), the Malawi National Health Research Policy, the Malawi National Environmental Policy (2004), the National Cultural Policy (2015), the Malawi Public Sector Reform Policy among others. At international level, the policy is linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and the African Union Agenda 2063

#### 5. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE POLICY

The Research and Publication Committee spearheaded the development of the revised policy which will, among other things, address the research and related challenges, provide guidance on the conduct of research at MZUNI and ensure that the policy is in line with international standards.

#### 6. BROAD POLICY DIRECTION

**Policy Vision:** In line with the Mzuzu University vision of “A premier provider of tertiary education, adaptive research and outreach in Malawi and the World”, the research policy vision is: A premier provider of evidence based quality adaptive research in Malawi and beyond.

**Policy Mission:** In line with the Mzuzu University mission of “To provide high quality education, training, research and complimentary services to meet the technological, social and economic needs of individuals and communities in Malawi and the World”, the mission of the research policy is to promote

scientifically and ethically sound research that generates evidence to improve technological, social and economic needs of all people in Malawi.

### **Policy aim**

The main objective of the MZUNIRCP 2021 is to support the university research governance, capacity building, financing and knowledge generation and management which involves dissemination and utilization of research output.

### **Policy objective**

- a) Promote knowledge generation, interpretation, dissemination and utilisation that is in line with the national and international research priority areas and Mzuzu University Research Agenda.
- b) Promote and support adherence to the highest ethical and regulatory standards in the conduct of research and consultancy.
- c) Strengthen the generation and mobilisation of financial resources for research and research capacity strengthening.
- d) Strengthen individual and institutional capacity for conducting research and utilising the research results for policy and programming.
- e) Strengthen inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration in research at national and international and ensuring that the public, private and academia are actively involved.
- f) Promote the use of evidence to inform policy and programming by establishing appropriate mechanisms for the dissemination of research results and systematic review of research evidence.

## **7. POLICY PRIORITY AREAS**

The Research and Constancy Policy has identified seven (7) priority areas whose implementation will be key to the realisation of the aspiration to foster industrialisation and structural transformation of the economy as outlined in this Policy.

### **7.1. Policy priority area 1: Research and publication**

**Policy Statement:** Mzuzu University undertakes to create an effective environment for staff, students and collaborators to generate knowledge, dissemination, translation and utilization of research findings that will address national and international priority areas

#### **Strategies:**

- Develop a Research Agenda

- Offer small research grants to early career researchers on competitive basis.
- Restructure the Research and Publication Committee (RPC) to have members elected at a Faculty or Research Center
- Support staff to publish in credible peer review or refereed journals and publishers
- Support whitelisting and blacklisting of journals and publishers
- Advise Management to recognise articles and books published only in whitelisted journals and publishers.

## **7.2. Policy priority area 2: Research Ethics**

**Policy Statement:** Mzuzu University shall ensure that all research undertaken by students, faculty members and their collaborators/co-investigators/affiliates is conducted according to high ethical standards and in compliance with the legal and regulatory requirements of Malawi and/or the country of location of the research project.

### **Strategies:**

- Develop a set of guidelines and SOPs
- Establish Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC).

## **7.3. Policy priority area 3: Intellectual Property Management**

**Policy statement:** Mzuzu University shall ensure to leverage IP as a tool for promoting and stimulating creativity and innovation for economic growth and development

### **Strategies:**

- Developed IP Policy
- Establish a Unit for IP
- Establish a technology transfer functions through the MZUNI Innovation and Technology Transfer Unit (MITTU).
- Establish an IP Steering Committee hereinafter IPSC,

## **7.4. Policy priority area 4: Research and Consulting advisory**

**Policy statement:** Mzuzu University shall create an effective space for staff to have practical experience in conducting research and consultancy that informs development challenges and society wellbeing.

**Strategies:**

- Establish a Research and Consultancy Advisory Unit

**7.5. Policy priority area 5: Individual consultancy**

**Policy statement:** Mzuzu University shall encourage outside professional activities undertaken by an academic or academic-related staff member that are consistent with the University's Mission.

**Strategies:**

- Encourage any member of staff involved in any form of consultancy to declare the contract/involvement
- Support individual consultancies and other outside staff activities to take place using University facilities.
- Leverage on Mzuzu University affiliation as an important sign of professional qualification,
- Support Departmental staff activities to take place using University facilities;

**7.6. Policy priority area 6: Community Outreach**

**Policy statement:** Mzuzu University shall encourage faculties to develop and implement effective annual based outreach programmes.

**Strategies:**

- Develop annual outreach calendar at faculty level
- Promote dissemination of research to various stakeholders concerned with research findings
- Engage various organisations through the social cooperate window to partner in outreach activities
- Expose students in outreach services at various levels.

**7.7. Policy priority area 7: Staff professional development**

**Policy statement:** Mzuzu University shall ensure that there is sustainable research capacity and knowledge to conduct research in line with the national development agenda, regional and global development agenda and Mzuzu University Research Agenda.

### **Strategies:**

- Support capacity building in research and consultancy development, research/project management
- Support strengthening of research infrastructure

## **8. GENERAL GUIDING STATEMENTS**

The Mzuzu University Council and Senate hereby affirms the following guidelines concerning conduct of research and consultancy.

An academic staff member or academic-related staff member of the University may engage in outside professional activities. The staff member may also receive monetary compensation for such activities, including externally funded project work and consultancies, etc., without reduction to University salary, allowances, or other benefits. However, all such outside activities, whether or not compensated, shall be subject to the approval of the staff member's Department Head and Dean of Faculty (Vice Chancellor approval required for Deans). It is the responsibility of the staff member's Dean and Department Head to verify and ensure that the staff member has made good arrangements for coverage of his or her teaching and administrative duties. Failure of an academic staff member to notify the Department Head and Dean of outside professional activities and to secure prior consent may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Approval for research, consultancy and outreach activities will normally be granted for no more than six (6) days per calendar month covered by the staff member's Mzuzu University employment contract/offer. This limit is intended to ensure that the staff member devotes 60% of the time to teaching and other assigned University duties. The Department Head and Dean of Faculty may waive the 6-day limit on a case-by-case basis, for example, when arrangements have been made for replacement staff, or for other good reason.

## **9. ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY**

Every internally and externally funded research project shall have a designated Principal Investigator (PI). The Principal Investigator shall normally be a member of the University's academic or academic-related staff.

### **9.1. Overhead costs for research projects**

MZUNI shall require that overhead costs in respect of processing and implementation of research projects are built into project proposals. At least 20% of the total research budget should be allocated for institutional overheads. It should be noted that this figure may be greater or less than the 20%, taking into account the prevailing policy of the funding agency.

The University and the Department must be compensated for management and overhead costs related to funded research project in accordance with the Mzuzu University Financial Policies for Funded Projects.

MZUNI shall ensure that the sharing of the contribution to overheads is as follows:

- 10% shall go to the University Administration for secretarial support; accounting and financial management support; telephone usage, internet access; office space, supplies and consumables; photocopying; printing; data processing
- 3% shall go to the immediate department or section hosting the project
- 2% shall go to the immediate faculty hosting the project
- 4% shall go to the RPC
- 1% shall go to the Library.

## **9.2. Overhead costs of consultancies**

MZUNI shall require that administrative costs in respect of processing and implementation of consultancies and services are built into project proposals. MZUNI shall ensure that sharing of the net proceeds from consultancy is as follows: 60% will go to the executing entity; 40% will go overheads for reimbursement of goods and services provided by the consultancy such as university staff time, University services.

MZUNI shall ensure that the sharing of the contribution to administrative overheads is as follows:

- 20% shall go to the University Administration for secretarial support; accounting and financial management support; telephone usage, internet access; office space, supplies and consumables; photocopying; printing; data processing
- 5% shall go to the immediate department or section hosting the project
- 3% shall go to the immediate faculty hosting the project
- 10% shall go to the RPC
- 2% shall go to the Library.

## **10 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

### **10.1 Coordination**

The implementation of this Policy will require multi-stakeholder approach across Faculties, Departments and Units, the Academia, Research and Development institutions, private sector and development partners. Policy implementation will



be coordinated by the Directorate of Research which shall have units responsible for Research and Publications, Research Ethics, Intellectual Property, Research and Consultancy Advisory. The implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation framework have been developed in order to guide the implementation of this Policy.

Research activities are conducted by members of staff and students in various faculties and research units. Faculties/departments/research units shall be encouraged to form research groups based on the themes and each group will be led by a senior scientist. The groups shall provide opportunity for upcoming researchers to learn from senior researchers (**mentorship**), seek research support from Mzuni Directorate of Research, write proposals for research funding and collaborate with other research teams within and outside Mzuni.

## **10.2. Dissemination of research**

The dissemination of research outputs and technologies is part and parcel of the implementation process. It needs to be built in from the research proposal stage through to the budgeting system and implementation of any research programme. The Directorate of Research in conjunction with RPC and research units shall be responsible for arranging dissemination of research findings to the public. To ensure that this is achieved, the following guidelines shall be followed:

- Each research group must ensure that research outputs/technologies reach end-users.
- Each research proposal must establish a specific budget line on dissemination.
- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall produce annual reports
- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall produce occasional papers including research bulletins and circulars and popular publications with simplified results that can be prepared for the media.
- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall utilise web-sites, research repository and take advantage of the electronic media, magazines and newsletters for features and interviews.
- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall encourage and support researchers to publish results in local and international peer reviewed credible journals.
- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall exhibit technologies at trade fairs and be able to make them available to users.
- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall organise period research seminars

- Directorate of Research in collaboration with faculties/departments and research units shall organise annual theme specific conferences/symposia

## **11. MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING**

Research requires an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system that enables the assessment of performance, resource utilization, impact and effectiveness of a programme. It is, therefore, important that a proper M&E system be implemented to ensure proper accountability.

The Directorate of Research and RPC shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating research activities at Mzuni. Research Compliance Officer shall be responsible for ethics compliance, NCST shall be responsible for national level compliance checks. The following shall be the means by which the Directorate will achieve proper monitoring of research activities:

The policy will be reviewed after every 5 years. This will provide opportunity to adjust the focus and maintain a standing point for research at Mzuni. The review will take into consideration recommendations, deliberations and inputs from monitoring and evaluation reports.