



Research MoU Policy, 2025

Prepared by

Research & Extension Committee

United College

Kumaripati, Lalitpur

February 2025

Introduction

This policy outlines the comprehensive framework for establishing, managing, and maintaining research collaborations through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between United College (UC) and its external partners, including academic institutions, research organizations, government agencies, and private sector entities, both nationally and internationally. The purpose of this policy is to provide a structured and formalized approach to collaboration, ensuring that all parties involved are aligned with the college's academic and research objectives. It serves as a guideline for students, faculty, researchers, administrative staff, and external collaborators to foster effective, long-term partnerships. The policy emphasizes the importance of clarity, consistency, and mutual understanding throughout the entire research collaboration process. Additionally, this policy highlights the need for collaborations that bring about tangible benefits for all parties, whether in the form of shared knowledge, technological advancements, intellectual property, or financial resources. By providing a standardized framework for the negotiation and implementation of MoUs, this policy ensures that UC can engage in meaningful, productive collaborations while safeguarding its academic mission, legal obligations, and ethical standards.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear, structured, and consistent framework for forming, managing, and maintaining research collaborations between UC and external partners. This policy ensures that all partnerships align with the college's academic objectives, ethical standards, and legal requirements. It provides guidelines for defining the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all parties involved, promoting transparency and accountability throughout the collaboration process. The policy aims to foster mutually beneficial partnerships with academic institutions, research organizations, government agencies, and private sector entities, both nationally and internationally.

Scope

This policy outlines the collaborative framework between UC and external entities to engage in joint research initiatives. It defines the key objectives, roles, and responsibilities of each party, including resource allocation, intellectual property rights, timelines, funding, and the expectations for research outcomes. The policy ensures that the collaboration aligns with both UC's strategic goals and the external partner's research objectives, providing a clear and mutually beneficial pathway for academic advancement.

Definition

- **Research partnership:** A formal collaboration between UC and external entities, such as academic institutions, government agencies, NGOs, INGOs, and private sector organizations, located both nationally and internationally, aimed at pursuing joint research objectives and advancing knowledge in specific fields of study.

- **Collaborators:** Parties involved in a research partnership, including the research coordinator, faculty members, principal investigators, researchers, students, and external entities (such as partner organizations or funding bodies), each contributing expertise, resources, and support to the research effort.
- **Intellectual property:** Creations and innovations resulting from the research collaboration, including patents, trademarks, copyrights, inventions, designs, and any other forms of intellectual property that may be generated, developed, or co-owned by the parties during the course of the collaboration.
- **Confidentiality:** The safeguarding of proprietary or sensitive information exchanged between the collaborating parties during the research collaboration. This includes ensuring that confidential data, methodologies, results, or agreements are protected from unauthorized disclosure and used only for the agreed-upon research purposes.
- **Funding arrangement:** The financial support provided for the research collaboration, which includes the identification of funding sources, distribution of funds, financial responsibilities of each party, and any terms related to the allocation, reporting, or management of the funds.

Criteria

- **Eligibility:** Academic institutions, government agencies, private sector entities, NGOs, INGOs, individual researchers, and other relevant parties, whether nationally or internationally, are eligible to enter into research collaborations.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborations may encompass a variety of research activities, including but not limited to collaborative research projects, interdisciplinary studies, technology transfer, faculty development programs, student exchange programs, workshops, conferences, training sessions, and extension activities.
- **Goals:** The expected outcomes of research collaborations include a range of tangible and intangible benefits, such as publications in academic journals, the development of patents, copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property, successful workshops, conferences, and training programs, the submission of proposals to funding agencies like the UGC, as well as the promotion of extension activities that contribute to community development and the dissemination of knowledge.

Guiding principles

- Collaborations must support the college's academic mission and align with its core values, enhancing the institution's long-term goals.
- Partnerships should be clear, transparent, and free from conflicts of interest, with defined roles, responsibilities, and terms.

- Partnerships should promote diversity and equal opportunities for all, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for students, faculty, and staff.
- Collaborations must aim for long-term impact, financial sustainability, and resource conservation, benefiting both the college and the external partner.
- The college's commitment to academic freedom must be respected, ensuring that faculty can conduct research and teaching independently from external influences.
- External agencies and the college must collaborate based on mutual respect, clear shared goals, and open communication for successful partnerships.
- Partnerships should adhere to ethical standards, promote social responsibility, and make a positive impact on society.
- Collaborations should foster creativity, innovation, and a commitment to excellence, helping elevate the college's standing in research, education, and public service.

Approval and authorization

- **Approval:** The process for entering into an MoU begins with the Research Coordinator from the RMC initiating communication with the external entity to clarify the purpose, benefits, and objectives of the collaboration. The Research Coordinator then assesses the external partner's research infrastructure and resources, ensuring that they align with the college's standards. Additionally, the proposed external entity is reviewed for legal compliance by consulting with the college's legal department. If the initial evaluation is favorable, the proposal is submitted to the college principal, who then presents it to the CMC for final approval.
- **Authorization:** The college's principal is authorized to sign the MoU on behalf of the institution with the external agency. The Research Coordinator acts as a witness to the signing, ensuring that the process adheres to institutional standards and that all necessary documentation is properly completed.

Roles and responsibilities

UC:

- The MoU should include all the necessary infrastructure, resources, and administrative supports committed to provide by the UC.
- The MoU should include designated person who will oversee the day-to-day operations of the collaboration, maintaining communication with external partners, monitoring progress, and ensuring adherence to the agreed-upon research objectives.
- The MoU should include UC faculty, staff, and students who will actively participate in the research activities, contributing their expertise and supports.

External partner(s):

- The MoU should include that the external partner(s) will provide the necessary resources, funding, expertise, or facilities required for the successful execution of the collaboration, as detailed in the MoU.

- The MoU should include that the external partner(s) must adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and ethical standards governing the conduct of research.
- The MoU should include the designate qualified personnel to contribute to the collaboration, leveraging their expertise as per the objectives outlined in the MoU.

Joint responsibilities:

- The MoU should include that both UC and the external partner(s) are committed to maintaining transparent and open communication throughout the collaboration, ensuring that all parties are kept informed about progress, challenges, and developments.
- The MoU should include that both parties will collaborate to achieve the mutually defined research objectives, ensuring that the research is conducted efficiently.

Procedure

From the College side:

- 1. Identify research needs and partnership opportunities:** UC evaluates its research gaps and strategic goals, identifying areas where external collaborations could enhance academic and research outcomes. Potential partners are assessed based on expertise, resources, and shared research interests to align with UC's objectives.
- 2. Initiate contact with external entities:** UC's Research Coordinator contacts potential external partners to explore mutual interests and collaboration opportunities. These early discussions help establish common goals, clarify expectations, and set the foundation for a formal partnership and further negotiations.
- 3. Develop initial proposal and draft MoU:** UC prepares an initial proposal outlining research objectives, roles, responsibilities, and resource allocation. The proposal serves as the foundation for drafting the MoU, ensuring alignment of both parties' contributions, timelines, and expectations before formalizing the partnership.
- 4. Review and approval by UC leadership:** The MoU draft undergoes review by UC's legal team, academic committees, and leadership to ensure compliance with institutional policies and strategic goals. Necessary revisions are made, and once approved, it proceeds to negotiation with the external partner.
- 5. Negotiate terms with the external entity:** UC enters negotiations with the external partner to finalize key terms, including research objectives, intellectual property rights, funding, and timelines. Both parties discuss and refine the agreement to ensure mutual benefit and alignment with research goals.
- 6. Obtain final MoU approval:** After successful negotiations, the finalized MoU is submitted for approval to UC's Principal and the CMC. Once it receives approval, both parties can proceed to sign the MoU, marking the official start of the collaboration.

7. **Monitor, review, and evaluate the collaboration:** UC actively monitors the collaboration, ensuring that milestones are met and objectives are being achieved. Regular progress reports, evaluations, and periodic reviews help track the research's success and allow for adjustments to maintain alignment with goals.

From external entities:

1. **Initiate contact with UC:** External entities initiate contact with UC through its Research Coordinator or faculty. Initial conversations explore common interests, ensuring both parties align on objectives, research goals, and potential contributions, establishing a basis for a formal partnership.
2. **Develop initial proposal and draft MoU:** External entities collaborate with UC to develop an initial proposal outlining research objectives, responsibilities, and expected outcomes. This proposal forms the basis for drafting the MoU, ensuring both sides agree on roles, resource allocation, and the expected collaboration framework.
3. **Review and approval by UC leadership:** External entities work with UC as the MoU draft undergoes internal review by UC's legal and academic committees. This ensures alignment with UC's policies and strategic goals. Adjustments are made as needed before proceeding to the next stage in formalizing the partnership.
4. **Negotiate terms with UC:** External partners engage with UC to finalize key MoU terms, including intellectual property rights, research objectives, and financial arrangements. The goal is to clarify roles and expectations while ensuring the agreement is fair, balanced, and aligned with both entities' interests.
5. **Obtain final MoU approval:** Once negotiations are complete, external entities await UC's final approval of the MoU. This review ensures both parties' agreement aligns with their strategic goals. Once approved, the MoU is ready for signing, formalizing the partnership and initiating the collaborative research.
6. **Monitor, review, and evaluate the collaboration:** After signing the MoU, external entities collaborate with UC to monitor the research project's progress. Regular updates, milestone tracking, and evaluations help assess the project's success and ensure both parties stay aligned, making adjustments to keep the project on track.

Intellectual Property (IP)

Ownership of IP:

- The MoU should specify that intellectual property generated through the research collaboration (e.g., patents, trademarks, copyrights, data, publications) will be co-owned by UC and the external partner(s), unless otherwise agreed upon in the MoU.

- The specific terms of IP ownership, including rights to commercialization, patents, and licensing, will be clearly outlined in the MoU. If applicable, UC and the external partner(s) will negotiate the terms for patent filings and other related processes.

Protection of IP:

- The MoU should include provisions ensuring that all parties implement safeguards to protect intellectual property from unauthorized use or disclosure, in compliance with the agreed-upon confidentiality terms.
- Confidentiality agreements or Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) may be required for any proprietary data, findings, or technologies shared during the collaboration.

Publication and dissemination:

- The MoU should specify that all research findings resulting from the collaboration will be subject to publication in academic journals, conferences, or other scientific outlets, unless restricted by confidentiality clauses.
- The MoU should outline how publications will acknowledge both UC and the external partner(s) and include any restrictions on the timing or content of publications.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

Confidential information:

- The MoU should include a clause stating that both UC and the external partner(s) agree to keep all confidential and proprietary information received from the other party during the collaboration confidential.
- The MoU should include a provision that confidentiality must be maintained for the duration of the MoU and for a period of [X] years.

Disclosure restrictions:

- The MoU should include a clause specifying that the disclosure of confidential information will only be allowed to individuals directly involved in the research collaboration and on a need-to-know basis.
- The MoU should include a statement that any proposed disclosures to third parties, such as for publication or funding applications, must be agreed upon in writing by both UC and the external partner(s).

Funding and Financial Responsibilities

Funding sources:

- The MoU must clearly define the sources of funding for the research collaboration, including contributions from UC and the external partner(s).
- If external funding (e.g., grants) is involved, the MoU must specify the terms of funding, including the amount, distribution, and the duration of financial support.

Financial responsibilities:

- The MoU should outline the financial obligations of each party, including how funds will be allocated for research costs, equipment, salaries, travel, and other expenses.

- Both parties agree to maintain transparent financial reporting and regularly update each other on expenditures and use of funds.

Accountability and auditing:

- The MoU must provide for regular financial audits or reviews to ensure the proper use of research funds.
- Any surplus or underspent funds will be managed according to the agreed-upon terms in the MoU, and parties will work together to reallocate or return funds as necessary.

Duration

- The MoU should include that the duration of the collaboration will be clearly specified, whether it pertains to a specific research project with a defined timeline or an ongoing partnership with periodic evaluations.
- The MoU should include that key milestones and deadlines will be outlined to ensure that both parties remain aligned with the agreed-upon objectives and timeline.
- The MoU should include that the renewal or extension of the MoU must be agreed upon by both parties in writing before the expiration of the current term. Any changes to the duration or terms of the MoU will require mutual consent and formal documentation.

Communication and transparency**Communication**

- The MoU should include provisions for UC and its external partners to provide regular updates on the progress of the research, including milestones achieved, challenges faced, and any adjustments to timelines or objectives.
- The MoU should specify that updates are to be clear, concise, and timely, with periodic progress reports, data sharing, and documentation of findings.
- The MoU should mention the designation of a primary point of contact for both parties to manage communication and address any concerns or queries.
- The MoU should highlight the process for informal discussions as the first step in resolving disagreements, followed by formal dispute resolution mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation, or arbitration.

Transparency

- The MoU should include a provision stating that both UC and external partners will make all major decisions collaboratively, ensuring that both parties are fully informed and that decisions are made with mutual consent.
- The MoU should specify that both parties will have full access to research data and documentation, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- The MoU should highlight the importance of financial transparency, requiring clear documentation of funding, expenditures, and budgets, along with regular reporting.
- The MoU should mention that research findings, publications, and presentations are to be made publicly available, and both parties are accountable for conducting research ethically and reporting any deviations from the plan.

Compliance with laws and ethical standards**Legal compliance:**

- The MoU should include provision that both UC and the external partner(s) agree to comply with all relevant local, national, and international laws, regulations, and standards governing research. This includes, but is not limited to:
 1. Laws related to human and animal subject research, ensuring that any research involving human participants or animals is conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and legal requirements.
 2. Data protection laws to ensure that all research data, especially personal or sensitive information, is handled, stored, and shared in compliance with privacy and data protection regulations.
 3. Environmental impact regulations to ensure that research activities do not adversely affect the environment, and that any necessary environmental permits or evaluations are obtained.

Ethical standards:

- The MoU should specify that both parties commit to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout the duration of the collaboration. This includes:
 1. Ensuring the integrity of research data, avoiding any form of manipulation or falsification, and maintaining transparency in the methods and results.
 2. Obtaining informed consent from participants when necessary, ensuring that individuals involved in the research are fully informed of the nature of the study and their rights.
 3. Promoting transparency and accountability in all research activities, ensuring that research findings are openly communicated and that any potential conflicts of interest are disclosed.
 4. Adhering to ethical principles of fairness, justice, and respect for all individuals and communities involved in or impacted by the research.

Monitoring and evaluation**Progress tracking**

- The MoU should specify that the progress of the research project will be closely monitored through regular periodic reports and reviews to ensure that milestones and objectives are being met.
- Both UC and the external partner(s) should provide updates on the research timeline, challenges faced, and adjustments made to the original plan.
- These updates are required to be assessed to determine if the project is on track, with early intervention to address any potential delays or issues.

Performance metrics

- The MoU should include provisions for establishing key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate the success of the collaboration.

- These KPIs may include milestones achieved, the quality of research outputs (such as publications or patents), adherence to timelines and budget, and the effectiveness of communication between the parties.
- The KPIs are required to serve as benchmarks to assess both the academic and operational success of the collaboration.

Conflict resolution

- **Dispute resolution:** The MoU should specify that both UC and the external partner(s) agree to first attempt resolving disagreements through informal discussions in good faith. If these discussions fail, formal dispute resolution methods, such as negotiation, mediation, or arbitration, should be outlined.
- **Jurisdiction:** The MoU should specify the jurisdiction in which any legal disputes will be resolved, ensuring that it aligns with both parties' applicable local and international laws. It should clearly state the jurisdiction under which legal proceedings will be conducted, unless the parties mutually agree to a different jurisdiction.

Amendment and review of terms

- **Amendment:** Any changes or amendments to the MoU should be made in writing and mutually agreed upon by both UC and the external partner(s). All amendments must be signed and dated by authorized representatives from both parties.
- **Review:** The MoU should stipulate that the terms will be reviewed periodically (e.g., annually) to assess if both parties are fulfilling their obligations and if the collaboration remains aligned with its goals.

Exit strategy

If objectives are met:

- The MoU should specify the procedure for exit once the objectives are met, including how remaining financial obligations, final documentation, and IPR will be handled. Both parties must ensure proper closure of the project, including the return or disposal of confidential information and data, as per the MoU's terms.

Termination

- The MoU should specify that either party may terminate the agreement by providing written notice [X] months in advance, as per the terms outlined within the MoU.
- Grounds for termination may include, but are not limited to:
 1. Breach of contract or failure to fulfill obligations outlined in the MoU.
 2. Failure to meet research objectives or milestones as defined in the MoU.
 3. Unethical conduct or failure to uphold ethical standards during the collaboration.
 4. Failure to provide the necessary resources, support, or infrastructure required for the successful execution of the research.