

Research Proposal Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to support applications in preparing clear, comprehensive and competitive research grant proposals. Applicants should read these guidelines alongside the relevant call for proposals and the evaluation rubric applicable to their grant stream

1. Abstract/Executive Summary

An Abstract or Executive Summary provides an overview of the proposal and the proposed research project. The broad research aims should be briefly described, as well as the activities to be undertaken to achieve the project goals. In case of basic research, scientific hypothesis or research aims should be identified on which the proposed goal is based and if research is applied output in the form of a product or process, need or relationship to industry and end-user of the output/ product should be identified. Abstract should not be more than 500 words.

2. Introduction

This is a proposal writing guide for research grants. Your proposal must contain all sections as outlined in the evaluation rubric. In addition, the following sections are mandatory regardless of grant stream:

1. Abstract/Executive Summary
2. Introduction and Problem Statement
3. List of References

Read the rubric carefully before preparing your proposal, as reviewers will evaluate your submission against each criterion. This guide covers the sections that are common to most grant types and is intended as a general guideline only. Ideally, your proposal should address the points outlined in these guidelines. However, you may include any additional relevant or necessary information based on the specific requirements of your proposal. You can decide the length of your proposal; however, a proposal that is too short and does not provide enough detail may be screened out at the initial stage or may be rejected by the reviewers.

To preserve anonymity during the review process, proposals must not include the names or Other identifying information of the PI or Co-PI(s). For collaborative and other grants where PI and co-PI compatibility is part of the rubric, focus on their research skills, areas of expertise, research interests, and past joint research experience. Describe how their skills and expertise complement or add to each other, but do not mention their names. For collaborative grants, this part of the rubric will be evaluated by OOR and will NOT be sent to the reviewers to keep the review process transparent.

3. Research Rigor and Excellence



Your proposal should clearly demonstrate the academic quality and originality of your research. Reviewers will assess whether your work is grounded in strong theoretical frameworks, fieldwork or experimentation. Ensure that:

1. The research question(s) is original and contributes meaningfully to the field
2. The work is positioned within established academic discourse
3. The proposal demonstrates potential for publication in a reputable peer-reviewed journal or conference
4. Scientific soundness and rigor are evident throughout

4. Literature Review

This section should reflect a strong command of existing knowledge in your area. Reviewers will evaluate how well you contextualize your research and identify a clear gap. Ensure that:

1. Relevant and recent literature is cited and synthesized, not just listed
2. The theoretical context is clearly established
3. A distinct gap in existing knowledge is identified and directly linked to your proposed research
4. The review demonstrates critical engagement with sources rather than mere summarization

5. Methodology and Feasibility

Reviewers will assess whether your research design is logical, robust and realistically achievable within the given timeline and budget. Ensure that:

1. The research design and approach are clearly described and appropriate for the research question
2. Data collection, analysis and interpretation methods are explicitly outlined
3. Tools, instruments or frameworks to be used are identified
4. The methodology is feasible within the project duration and available resources
5. Any data sharing plan is mentioned where applicable

6. Student Inclusion and Supervision Plan

This section evaluates how meaningfully students will be integrated into the research. Ensure that:

1. The specific roles and tasks assigned to student researchers are clearly described
2. A supervision and mentorship plan are outlined



3. Students are given opportunities for genuine skill development and learning
4. The pedagogical value of their involvement is articulated

7. Community Impact & Local Contextual Problem

Reviewers will assess whether your research addresses a real, pressing issue within the local context. Ensure that:

1. A specific local or national problem is clearly identified and justified
2. The relevance of the research to local communities and its alignment with Habib University's research priorities are clearly demonstrated.
3. The real-world impact and beneficiaries of the research are explicitly stated
4. The project goes beyond academic contribution to create tangible social value

8. Project Management & Execution

This section should demonstrate that your project is operationally sound. Reviewers will look for a realistic and detailed plan. Ensure that:

1. A clear timeline with milestones is provided, preferably as a Gantt chart
2. Responsibilities are distributed among team members
3. Potential risks or challenges are identified with contingency plans
4. The project can realistically be completed within the proposed duration

9. Outcomes and Deliverables

Reviewers will assess what the project will tangibly produce. Ensure that:

1. All deliverables are clearly listed and measurable
2. Deliverables may include publications, policy briefs, patents, datasets, software prototypes or conference presentations
3. The value and significance of each deliverable to the field is briefly explained
4. Timelines for each deliverable are indicate.

10. Budget

Your budget should be detailed, justified and realistic. Reviewers will check whether all costs are transparently accounted for. Ensure that:

1. All expense heads are clearly listed including equipment, student pay, travel and materials



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2. Prices are supported by official vendor quotes, website screenshots or rough estimates will not be accepted
3. Each budget line is justified in relation to the research activities
4. A contingency allocation is included for unforeseen expenses
5. The budget is submitted using the provided budget template spreadsheet.

Evaluation Rubrics

The rubric applicable to your grant stream is provided below. Reviewers will score each section against the criteria and weighting shown.

Summer Tehqiq Research Program (STRP) — Evaluation Rubric					
Project Name: _____			Reviewer Name: _____		
Scoring Guide 5 = Exemplary: Flawless and Insightful. Provides a clear, comprehensive, and compelling narrative. Exceeds expectations by identifying potential risks and presenting well-justified, practical solutions. 4 = Very Good: Strong and Well-Defined. Fully meets requirements with clarity and coherence. Demonstrates a solid understanding of the subject with only minor, non-critical gaps. 3 = Good: Satisfactory. Adequately addresses the criteria and provides sufficient information. May lack depth, specificity, or innovation. (Baseline / average score) 2 = Fair: Developing. Addresses the criteria but contains noticeable gaps, limited detail, or insufficient supporting evidence. 1 = Poor: Substantially Weak. Demonstrates limited understanding or preparation. Significant weaknesses undermine feasibility or clarity. 0 = Incomplete: Missing or Irrelevant. Section is absent or does not address the evaluation criteria.					
#	Section	Evaluation Details	Weight (%)	Score (0–5)	Comments
1	Abstract / Executive Summary	Provide a brief summary of the proposed project, including the main research aim, expected direction of the work, and planned activities during the ten-week period. Indicate whether the project is basic or applied for research and highlight the expected value.	10		
2	Problem Statement and Research Questions Aims	List specific questions or aims for the STRP period. Keep them narrow, well-defined, and feasible within ten weeks. Describe the problem or opportunity the project addresses. Provide background, explain why the topic matters, and identify the areas to be explored. Show why the scope fits a ten-week research effort.	10		
3	Literature Review	Summarize existing secondary research. Clarify how this project builds on existing research and what new insight, if any, it aims to add.	5		
4	Methodology	Outline the intended method of research: design, tools/frameworks, data collection, analysis, or development activities. Show how tasks will be carried out in a structured, realistic way within the program timeline. Mention any data management or sharing plan if relevant.	15		
5	Outcomes and Deliverables	Explain expected outcomes and list planned deliverables. The poster is a required deliverable. Other deliverables (e.g., short report, prototype, dataset, design, draft article) may be included at the PI's discretion and should match scope and timeline. Also, specify the expected student outputs. This must include contributions to the poster, along with any additional deliverables as determined by the Principal Investigator (PI).	10		



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#	Section	Evaluation Details	Weight (%)	Score (0–5)	Comments
6	Contribution to Undergraduate Research	Role of Rising Junior: Describe the responsibilities and tasks appropriate for rising juniors within the project. Role of Rising Senior (if applicable): Outline the advanced responsibilities expected of rising seniors, including any mentorship or supervisory roles involving junior team members.	10		
	Contribution to Undergraduate Research	Student Skill-set and Program Preference: Specify the required skills, relevant prior coursework, and any preparatory resources students should review. Indicate preferred academic programs (e.g., CND, CS, EE). A maximum of three students may be requested. Mix of the students i.e GSCP, rising junior and/or rising senior is explained in the call.			
7	Student Supervision and Implementation Plan	Describe the structure of supervision, including meeting frequency, check-ins, and the nature of guidance provided. Briefly outline how students will develop and strengthen their research skills over the ten-week period.	15		
8	Use of STRP for Future or Long Running Research	Explain how the ten-week project aligns with and contributes to a larger research trajectory. Outline any planned extensions, follow-on studies, prototypes, publications, or future funding opportunities that may emerge from this work.	15		
9	Budget (PKR)	Complete the budget spreadsheet provided in the application. If prior funding has been received, clearly explain how STRP funds will support new or distinct project activities. This section is excluded from the 1,000-word limit.	10		
Total			100		



NFRG, IRG and GFRG — Evaluation Rubric

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1	Research Rigor and Excellence	Definition: The academic quality, originality, and scientific soundness of the proposed research. Focus: Assesses whether the work is grounded in strong theory/field work/experimentation, employs high-standard scientific processes, and holds strong potential for publication in reputable peer-reviewed journals or reputable conferences.	20		
2	Literature Review	Definition: The synthesis of existing research relevant to the proposed topic. Focus: Evaluates the applicant's understanding of the current state of knowledge, how well they establish the theoretical context, and whether they have clearly identified a distinct gap the project aims to fill.	10		
3	Methodology and Feasibility	Definition: The technical design, tools, and processes proposed to conduct the study. Focus: Determines whether the scientific approach is logical, robust, and realistically doable given the allocated resources and timeline.	20		
4	Student Inclusion and Supervision Plan	Definition: The strategy for mentoring and integrating students into the research team. Focus: Evaluates how students will be trained, guided, and assigned meaningful research tasks, ensuring they receive high-impact pedagogical value.	5		
5	Community Impact & Local Contextual Problem	Definition: The identification of a specific, pressing issue within the local environment and the real-world difference the project will make. Focus: Assesses whether the project addresses a localized problem, ensuring the work is socially relevant, practical, and beneficial to local stakeholders and communities.	10		
6	Project Management & Execution	Definition: The operational roadmap and risk management plan for the project. Focus: Evaluates the timeline, milestones, and distribution of responsibilities to ensure the project can be completed on time and has adequate contingencies for unexpected challenges.	15		
7	Outcomes and Deliverables	Definition: The tangible, measurable results produced by the project. Focus: Identifies exactly what the project intends to	10		



NFRG, IRG and GFRG — Evaluation Rubric

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		produce and leave behind, such as publications, policy briefs, patents, software prototypes, or datasets.			
8	Budget (PKR)	Definition: The detailed financial plan for the project, calculated in Pakistani Rupees. Focus: Checks if all costs (like equipment, student pay, travel, and materials) are clearly listed and explained. Prices are coming from official seller quotes instead of website screenshots or estimates. A portion of budget is left for unexpected costs.	10		
Total			100		



Collaborative Research Grant (CRG) — Evaluation Rubric

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#	Section	Evaluation Details	Weight (%)	Score (0–5)	Comments
1	PI + Co-PI(s) collaboration	Definition: The alignment of skills, expertise, and roles between the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PI(s). Focus: Evaluates how well the PI and Co-PI(s) backgrounds complement each other to complete the project. Also, if there is a clear division of work and a strong plan for how they will work together.	10		
2	Multidisciplinary nature of the project	Definition: How the project combines knowledge and methods from both the schools i.e. AHSS and DSSE. Focus: Checks if the project genuinely connects these two schools to solve a problem. It evaluates how well the technical/scientific side (DSSE) and the human/social side (AHSS) work together to create a single, shared solution.	10		
3	Research Rigor and Excellence	Definition: The academic quality, originality, and scientific soundness of the proposed research. Focus: Assesses whether the work is grounded in strong theory/field work/experimentation, employs high-standard scientific processes, and holds strong potential for publication in reputable peer-reviewed journals or reputable conferences.	20		
3	Literature Review	Definition: The synthesis of existing research relevant to the proposed topic. Focus: Evaluates the applicant's understanding of the current state of knowledge, how well they establish the theoretical context, and whether they have clearly identified a distinct gap the project aims to fill.	5		
4	Methodology and Feasibility	Definition: The technical design, tools, and processes proposed to conduct the study. Focus: Determines whether the scientific approach is logical, robust, and realistically doable given the allocated resources and timeline.	15		
5	Student Inclusion and Supervision Plan	Definition: The strategy for mentoring and integrating students into the research team. Focus: Evaluates how students will be trained, guided, and assigned meaningful research tasks, ensuring they receive high-impact pedagogical value.	5		
6	Community Impact & Local	Definition: The identification of a specific, pressing issue within the local environment and the real-world difference the	10		



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	Contextual Problem	project will make. Focus: Assesses whether the project addresses a localized problem, ensuring the work is socially relevant, practical, and beneficial to local stakeholders and communities.			
7	Project Management & Execution	Definition: The operational roadmap and risk management plan for the project. Focus: Evaluates the timeline, milestones, and distribution of responsibilities to ensure the project can be completed on time and has adequate contingencies for unexpected challenges.	10		
8	Outcomes and Deliverables	Definition: The tangible, measurable results produced by the project. Focus: Identifies exactly what the project intends to produce and leave behind, such as publications, policy briefs, patents, software prototypes, or datasets.	10		
9	Budget (PKR)	Definition: The detailed financial plan for the project, calculated in Pakistani Rupees. Focus: Checks if all costs (like equipment, student pay, travel, and materials) are clearly listed and explained. Prices are coming from official seller quotes instead of website screenshots or estimates. A portion of budget is left for unexpected costs.	5		
Total			100		