RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

POLICY

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1. General Introduction

1.1. Background

The University of Rwanda (UR) is the only public university in Rwanda. The overarching strategic goal of the UR is to become a research-led University. Therefore, in consideration of the increasing number of academic staff, it is important to ensure that research outcomes and knowledge created are relevant and make sound contributions to the socio-economic transformation as articulated in Rwanda's Vision 2050. Furthermore, the University of Rwanda ought to identify and prioritize areas of research through a research agenda that aligns with the institution's mission, strengths, and strategic goals while addressing societal challenges and advancing knowledge in various fields. This new research agenda provides the concrete direction of the University in terms of research and development for the next five (5) years (2023-2027).

The University of Rwanda is expected to generate evidence-based policies to guide national development, especially as stipulated in the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) and Vision 2050. In this regard, major research areas were identified and grouped into 10 interdisciplinary research clusters derived from emerging national and sectoral priorities aligned with national development goals (e.g Capacity Development and Employment Services Board, Rwanda's Vision 2050) and the University's strategic plan and College plans. All these efforts are also intended to position the University as a regional and global player in development. Furthermore, this research and innovation policy is aligned with the East African Community Vision 2050, African Union Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In all these, research is highlighted as one of the pillars to achieve the 'Africa we Want' where it is stated that there is a need to "promote science, technology, research and innovation, to build knowledge, human capital, capabilities and skills to drive innovations and for the African century". Therefore, the University of Rwanda Research and Innovation policy highlights research priorities considering National, Regional and Global priorities.

Furthermore, the UR research and innovation policy hinges on academic freedom for its staff to conduct research, either individually or in groups, through any research partnerships and both external and internal research affiliations. This freedom allows academics as individuals, collaborators, or affiliates to research on any topic of their choice within the agreed ethical framework and to disseminate the results without hindrance. Academic freedom also means that researchers may assemble the research teams they want based on relevance, skills and capacities of individuals to contribute to and support the research project.

1.2. The rationale for policy development

The development of this research and innovation policy is developed for several reasons. Firstly, it is aligned with the new strategic plan of the University of Rwanda that needs to be catered to by the ongoing policy. Secondly, the University of Rwanda has embarked on a new orientation of research and innovation. This new orientation emphasizes the need to promote Challenge-Based Research (CBR) to ensure that research is used by UR to become responsive to societal challenges through technology and innovation. Thirdly, it aims to enhance UR's capacity to produce research and provide science-based guidance for policy and decision-making in national socio-economic development.

1.3. Policy development process

The formulation of the UR research and innovation policy resulted from a multi-stage process, involving a desk review, a situation analysis, consultations with key partners and stakeholders, and validation through various academic forums.

Desk review. The UR senior management appointed a team of academic and administrative staff to lead the process of policy formulation. A number of reference documents was reviewed to set the stage for subsequent phases of consultations.

College-level consultations. The appointed team of the UR staff conducted key consultations with other university staff from all colleges, schools, and departments. At that stage, a number of issues were identified, and proposed actions were reflected during these consultations.

Alignment of the policy and research and innovation agenda. After consultations conducted at the level of colleges, the team appointed for the development of the research and innovation agenda for UR was also consulted to ensure alignment with the research policy. Both teams had to work together and ensure that the policy remains a high-level strategic document to guide the development of research and innovation at the University of Rwanda.

Validation of the policy document by different decision-making organs of UR. This research and innovation policy was progressively presented and approved by the UR organs including the Board before being used and made public to the community at the University of Rwanda and its stakeholders and partners.

1.4. Definition of key concepts

The following terminologies shall apply to this policy unless otherwise stated:
Academic and Research Staff: All staff employed by the UR that have the responsibility to carry out teaching, research, and community outreach activities.

Copyright (or author's right): It is a legal term used to describe the rights that creators have over their literary and artistic works (WIPO, 2022). Works covered by copyright range from books, music, paintings, photographs, publications, sculptures, and films to computer programs, databases, advertisements, maps, and technical drawings.

Ethics Review Committee: A panel of individuals appointed to review research proposals to ascertain that ethical principles are incorporated into the study design. The assessment is intended to ensure that the proposed research activities include no unnecessary risks, the potential risks to study participants are minimized, and the overall benefit to society is reasonable in relation to the risks involved.

Research Data: It is data collected, generated, or created during research and used to validate research findings and/or to enable the reproduction of the research. It can be digital, non-digital, observational, experimental, simulation, video or audio, derived, or reference material.

Research Grant: Contractual funds received to conduct scientific inquiry either from the UR or from an external institution or grants received for research geared to deepen the understanding of a phenomenon and advance the frontiers of knowledge.

Principal Investigator: He/ She is an academic staff member including honorary appointees with overall responsibility for the research project including the proposal, project management, research conduct, reporting and delivery of outcomes, and for the listing order of research project members. For graduate research degree theses, the graduate research student is the research project leader.

Research Project: Any research-related activity that has investigation as a primary objective, has a defined plan, methodology, resources, timeline, and deliverables, and has the potential to contribute to new knowledge, both theoretical and practical.

Research Policy: A document guiding students, academic staff, and affiliated researchers in conducting and publishing research findings.

Research Proposal (or Proposal): It is an outline of a proposed research project or activity. Proposals are normally required for funding applications for competitive grants (including those that are led by another institution), tenders, contract research proposals, expressions of interest, intellectual property commercialization, and fellowships.

Research Records: They are any documentation or information prepared, maintained, or stored as evidence by the university or individuals for use in their work. They include correspondence (hardcopy and electronic), grant application documentation, human or animal ethics protocols (applications, approvals, and related documents), signed participant consent

forms and information sheets for research participants, research data management plans, authorship agreements, technical reports, research reports (to project or funding board) and other items like these.

Publications: A publication in this policy refers to books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers, and monographs produced by journals and publishers in indexed and reputable databases or publishing houses.

Technology transfer: refers to the process of sharing and disseminating knowledge, skills, technologies, methods, and other intellectual property from one individual, organization, or country to another. It involves the exchange of technology between different entities for the purpose of commercialization, further development, or application.

2. Research and Innovation in National, Regional, and Global Contexts

The UR has a mandate to match its research and innovation policy with national, regional, and global research policies and priorities. This research and innovation policy helps to achieve the policy and strategic goals relevant to research and innovation in Rwanda's Vision 2050, the East African Community Vision 2050, the African Union Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.1. Research and Innovation in the Vision 2050

Vision 2050 serves as the critical planning and policy blueprint to guide the efforts of all players in Rwanda's development, including academic and research institutions. In its second pillar on competitiveness and integration, fostering excellence in Research and Development (R&D) and future innovations are considered among the key specific priority areas. It is further anticipated to increase the gross domestic expenditure on research and development from 0.66% of GDP to 1.5% of GDP by 2035 and 3% by 2050. Furthermore, it is envisioned to increase the proportion of academic staff involved in research publications relevant to socio-economic development under human development objectives from 23% (in 2020) to 38.30% in 2035 and 52.0% by 2050. This research and innovation policy of UR will support the achievement of the above goals as UR contributes to its mandate of research and innovation for the national development.

2.2. The East African Community Vision 2050

The EAC's Vision 2050 acknowledges research and development as a key enabler of research and technology development initiatives. Several actions are proposed including the establishment of Research and Technology Development Fund and the establishment of a

regional research and Innovation Capacity Building Programme among others. Clearly, the implementation of this research and innovation policy will contribute and take advantage of existing and potential opportunities offered through the EAC's Vision 2050.

2.3. The African Union Agenda 2063

The second goal of the African Union Agenda 2063 provide well-educated citizens and a skills revolution underpinned by Science, Technology, and Innovation. Similarly, education and Science Technology and Innovation skills driven revolution stands as a key priority area. Furthermore, Agenda 2063 highlights research as one of the pillars to achieve the 'Africa we Want' where it is stated that there is a need to "promote science, technology, research, and innovation, to build knowledge, human capital, capabilities and skills to drive innovations and for the African century". Therefore, the implementation of this research and innovation policy allows the UR to contribute and benefit from regional opportunities offered through the agenda 2063.

2.4. The SDGs 2030

The role of research technology and innovation is well documented and needs to be further updated to respond to the needs of policy advisory and to the emerging challenges calling for more technology innovation. For example, will farmers in Rwanda and elsewhere in Africa continue to cultivate their lands with "hoes" beyond the SDGs? If so, how farmers will then feel that SDGs have been implemented among other issues they are faced with. Such important questions need research and innovation for advanced impacts of science and technology in Rwanda and elsewhere. This UR's policy on research and innovation will contribute to the generation of science and Research-based solutions addressing pressing needs as reflected in the 17 SDGs.

3. Situation Analysis

The formulation of this policy's statements and actions was enriched by the findings from a SWOT analysis conducted by UR. This helps to reflect on the current context of research development at UR by assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the research and innovation ecosystem. Further, this analysis helps to identify factors shaping both the internal and external environment of research conduct and dissemination by UR in collaboration with its partners. A summary of the SWOT findings is captured in the following Table (1). From the SWOT analysis (Table 1), despite the progress made in the past, research still faces some key gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. The following are some of the opportunities to consider in developing research at UR to ensure its impact in addressing societal needs and development challenges:

Table (1). SWOT analysis

Weaknesses	Strengths
• Limited research capacity and competencies for some of the University staff (research labs, skills in research dissemination) • Lack of a comprehensive research mentorship program for young or junior researchers • Low per capita research publication leading to insufficient as well as impactful research • Limited capacity to attract research funds through grant proposals compromising the ability for internally generated research projects and funding • Insufficient MSc and PhD holders • Insufficient infrastructure (labs, offices, etc) for fundamental and applied research projects • Insufficient research projects and grants • Insufficient publications • Lack of a comprehensive incentive scheme for retention of competent academic staff and researchers • Some structural break in continuous research post-PhD research training- limited post-doctoral and sabbatical opportunities • Lack of harmonised research training at undergraduate level • Research Institutions/Centres of excellence are not coordinated to link with college level activities • Lack of guidelines on the management of UR journals	• Qualified researchers • Committed researchers • Research funds management unit (SPIU) • Platform available and paid for by UR to avail funding opportunities to UR community • Unique public university • Multidisciplinary university • Advanced research training capacity • Existing research structure • Centres of excellence (Presence of centers of excellence /collaboration between different centres, diversification of discipline) • Scientific journals • Research infrastructure • Research review and ethics clearance committees and IRB • Office for international relations • Many new/young PhD holders/human resources • Bilingualism (use of French and English in addition to Kinyarwanda) • University of Rwanda with campuses across the country • UR encourages the multidisciplinary and collaborative research

Weaknesses	Strengths
- Limited research funding to support research activities such as conference and publication support - Insufficient PhD scholarships - Lack of Research status – categories of research staff at UR - Low research collaboration among academics (interdisciplinary) - Inequity between STEM and non-STEM in research opportunities - Non-use of training and research opportunities - Lack of a web-based research data management - Lack of horizontal promotion demotivates academic staff to do research (keeps professors' salary constant)	
Opportunities	Threats
- International collaborations (Collaboration with embassies, EU) - Locally available research funding opportunities (e.g NCST, ...) - Directorate of research at MINEDUC, RDB, NCST, etc - International funding (Sida, ARES, etc) - Honorary research affiliates - Collaboration with industry (private and public sector, Collaboration between UR research centres and national institutions (REB, RAB, NISR.) - Partnerships with other international universities	Increasing global dynamics calling for adaptation and timely response by researchers.

Weaknesses	Strengths
• Many potential research problems (Local solutions, Indigenous knowledge that can be researched, etc) • Integrated and professional lab services.	

4. Policy Vision, Mission, Objectives, and Guiding Principles

4.1. Vision and Mission of the Policy

The research vision of the UR is to be a globally engaged, competitive, and innovative research-driven university well positioned to respond to major social, economic development and environmental challenges. For this reason, UR academic and research staff are encouraged to carry out research, apply or compete for research scholarships and/or participate in creative activities that are appropriate to their discipline.

4.2. Overall Goal and Specific Objectives

This policy supports the University of Rwanda (UR) to position itself as a leading research institution in the region, with research having a direct positive impact on the quality of education at the UR, and with research functioning as a driver for economic development and service delivery. [AB1] This is consistent with the National Vision 2050 aimed at fostering excellence in research and development (R&D) as part of the priorities under its pillar of Competitiveness and integration. Therefore, to achieve this goal, the policy aims to support the creation of a conducive environment that promotes research and innovation by attracting and retaining top academic talents and enabling them to perform research on par with international standards that contribute to the national, regional, and global development agenda.

4.3. Guiding Principles

The development and implementation of this research policy will have to consider various guiding principles including the following:

(1) *Gender equality, equity, and women's empowerment.* The implementation of the research policy should consider the promotion of gender equality, equity, and empowerment of women in research-related activities.

(2) **Inclusion**. All research related interventions will have to consider the principle of inclusivity with all it entails. This includes people with special needs, junior and women researchers, consideration of all scientific fields and categories of researchers, among others.

(3) **Political will.** There is enough political will from the government and all players at all levels of governance including the senior management of the University of Rwanda to support research-related activities and promote science advice.

5. Policy Framework, Priorities, Policy Issues and Actions

Reference made to aspirations of Rwanda as provided by Vision 2050 and translated into the 5-year National Strategy for Transformation (NST2) as well as UR's strategic orientation, this section focuses on major research-related issues that need attention towards a research-led UR.

5.1. Policy Framework

This policy addresses various priority areas clustered around three main pillars of research and innovation development at UR plus cross-cutting area(s): (1) Research, Innovation, and Dissemination (RID), (2) Research Capacity Development, and (3) Research Management.

Pillar 1. Research, Innovation, and Dissemination

Policy Statement

The promotion of home-grown solutions means that the UR research must be oriented towards responding to local needs with the promotion of localised and situation-specific solutions but without compromising the quality of research and adhering to the highest international standards, i.e., thinking globally and acting locally. The promotion of Home-Grown Solutions also involves the use and development of local indigenous knowledge systems, integrating them with the other forms of knowledge systems. Moreover, the University of Rwanda has high research ambitions, and, therefore, intends to create a conducive environment. In return, it expects its researchers to produce high-quality research. To achieve excellent research productivity, the UR and its partners ensure appropriate research infrastructure including IT, laboratories, equipment, a well-resourced library, and a truly central support system in terms of research administration and research capacity building.

Policy Objective: Position UR as a research-led university that promotes home-grown solutions.

Key Policy Issues:

The current state of research conduct, innovation, and dissemination at UR needs to be improved. Some gaps persist calling for action. These include limited and insufficient per capita publications currently estimated at an average of 0.2 per year (UR Survey 2023) which is less than one publication per year per academic and research staff. Further, most of the publications observed are those published during the PhD or Master' research, and fewer are done post-graduation. Consequently, fewer publications lead to newly developed innovations and technologies meant to be disseminated and address societal needs and challenges. This is mainly explained by the fact the research conduct is not adequately informed by well-thought research themes and questions, lack of interdisciplinary research groups or teams, and inconsistent dissemination models and mechanisms for published research.

Policy Actions

The new development of research, innovation, and dissemination that includes technology transfer will need the implementation of the following policy actions:

(1) Define the research clusters to facilitate a more systematic and consistent choice of research thematic areas from all disciplines of colleges. These clusters are supported by cross-cutting themes that should be drawn from emerging national and sectoral priorities aligned with national research policies, priorities, and development goals.

(2) Continue promoting the culture of interdisciplinary publication among the academic and research staff across all colleges.

(3) Address the structural break in continuous research post-PhD research training by promoting more post-doctoral and sabbatical research exchange.

(4) Promote and nurture the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship with dedication to fostering scientific discovery that will fuel technological innovation, drive industries, and build resilience against emerging challenges.

(5) Establish clear guidelines and procedures for the utilization, management, and promotion of college-based Journals for research dissemination. These guidelines shall encompass editorial processes, peer-review standards, consistent and regular publication schedules, and quality assurance measures.

(6) Organize regular scientific conferences and policy dialogues as part of dissemination channels and mechanisms for science and policy linkages.

(7) Establish a strong technology transfer strategy/mechanism to disseminate and commercialize research products, innovations, and technologies from UR to the market or industry sector through patents, Trademarks and/or industrial designs, licensing agreements, and spin-offs/startups.

(8) Creation of an IT-based research database to bank all research-related data and ensure data handling, privacy, and sharing process.

(9) UR will develop and implement a robust research incentives scheme that rewards researchers for their contributions to scholarship, innovation, and knowledge dissemination, while simultaneously revising promotion policies to include criteria that recognize and reward research excellence, ensuring horizontal promotion opportunities that reflect researchers' academic achievements and contributions.

(10) Research results will be provided using various approaches, tools, and platforms including social media, press releases, policy briefs and white papers, videos, etc.

(11) all the UR research activities must conform to the UR ethical guidelines, and national and international best practices related to research conduct. The UR will strive to ensure a culture of research ethics and integrity and shall be an integral part of the training of postgraduate students.

(12) *Academic freedom:* The UR research policy is hinged on academic freedom for its staff to conduct research, either individually or in groups, through any research partnerships and both external and internal research affiliations. This freedom allows academics as individuals, collaborators, or affiliates to research on any topic of their choice within the agreed ethical framework and to disseminate the results without hindrance. Academic freedom also means that researchers may assemble the research teams they want based on relevance, skills, and capacities of individuals to contribute to and support the research project.

Pillar 2. Research Capacity Development

The training and development of postgraduate researchers constitute an important part of the UR's key activities. The relationship between the supervisor and the student and the competence of the supervisors to guide the students are key to driving the development of research and scholarship. Therefore, the UR has plans to increase its supervision capacity in order to increase its number of postgraduate students and programmes.

The UR has the responsibility to foster the development of the next generation of researchers by adopting a structured professional development programme for researchers and supporting staff. This program will equip beneficiaries with the necessary skills through regular short courses, training, and workshops on research communication, post-graduate supervision, academic writing, handling research data, grant proposal writing, pedagogical development, and dissemination of funding opportunities.

Policy Objective: Improve and ensure capacity building and support the growth of research and innovation at UR.

Key Policy issues:

Capacity building for research and innovation forms the foundation for sustainable research growth at UR. Building on the progress made in terms of capacity building for research

development (such as through PhD research training and other continuous training), the remaining gaps are yet to be addressed by this policy. These include limited capacity and competencies for some of the University Staff, lack of a comprehensive research mentorship program for young or junior researchers who potentially can increase research output thereby laying a strong ground for a reliable succession plan, insufficient and still growing MS and PhD programs, insufficient infrastructure and facilities (such as labs and modern offices for academic and researchers) for fundamental and applied research projects, lower numbers of staff with Masters and PhD degrees – a prerequisite for research conduct and innovation, and low collaboration among researchers and enforcement of interdisciplinary research implementation.

Policy Actions

The following policy actions will guide the development and implementation of interventions to improve the research capacity of UR among its academic and research staff:

(1) The University of Rwanda will enforce the existing staff development policy to ensure that tutorial assistants and master's degree holders register for master's and PhD programs respectively.
(2) Design a program for comprehensive mentorship and coaching of young and junior researchers for their academic and research career development.
(3) UR will improve the coordination of capacity needs assessment and capacity development plans at the college level.
(4) Strengthen the teaching and research through well-established Masters and PhD learning and research programs as part of means to increase the research products and outputs. This also entails the need to increase competence of supervisors at the UR to be able to guide students in conducting quality research as well as increasing the number of post-graduate students and inherent research activities.
(5) Create a seed research fund for returning PhD graduates for their post-graduate research at UR.

Pillar 3: Research Management, Funding, and Research Partnership

This pillar addresses issues pertaining to research management at the University of Rwanda. It provides policy actions aimed to improve the management of academic and research staff as well as the management of research grants and projects. More specifically, three priority areas are addressed: the management and coordination of research at UR, funding of research at UR, and research partnerships through research projects or other models of collaboration.

Research management and coordination

Policy Objective: Improve the efficiency of research management and coordination.

Key Policy Issue(s): There is improvement in the management process of the research at UR. But there are still gaps in terms of management of researchers and their activities, coordination of research activities especially at the college level, lack of incentives for researchers excelling in their carriers, centers of excellence that are not coordinated to link with the college level activities, and uncoordinated research grants generated by researchers in partnerships with other researchers within and outside of UR.

Policy Actions

To address the deficiencies observed in coordinating and managing research at UR, the following actions will be implemented in the context of this policy at UR:

(1) Capacitate and empower colleges to improve the coordination and management of research and innovation related activities.
(2) Establish an efficient research grant management system at the college level.
(3) Improve and ensure effective implementation of research incentive scheme(s) at UR.
(4) Improve the procurement process of research-related materials and equipment.
(5) Establish a comprehensive research mentorship program for young and junior researchers.
(6) Improve the coordination and ownership of Research Institutes/Centres of Excellence by their respective colleges.
(7) Streamline Processes and Removing Barriers. UR will streamline administrative processes, particularly in procurement and research fund management, to create a conducive and efficient research environment.
(8) Automate research reporting processes, improve research dissemination channels, and enhance collaboration among academics, both within and across disciplines. This helps to ensure the appropriate digitalization of research-related activities.
(9) The university will put in place adequate incentives and support systems to enable young researchers to focus on their research pursuits, reducing administrative and teaching burdens.

Funding of Research at UR

To address local as well as global challenges, the UR strives to attract external grant funding. It will promote multidisciplinary research by encouraging researchers to work in teams across colleges /faculties /schools /centers of excellence and disciplines. The UR will identify key research clusters/areas where it has competitive advantages and invest its resources to make itself a world-class leader in these niche areas, attracting collaboration from top international research leaders in the fields, substantial research grants, and publications in prestigious peer-reviewed and indexed journals. Through the Directorate of Research, the University of Rwanda will periodically review the relevance of the existing clusters and either drop or develop new ones.

Policy objective: Increase and diversify the research funding at UR.

Key policy issues:

The research funding at UR is currently funded through small grants attracted by a small number of researchers with limited direct funding from the government. Other policy issues include a lack of sufficient capacity to develop a clear winning research proposal, issue of capacity to develop a convinced detailed reasonable budget planning, a lack of feedback from colleagues before submission, and limited multi-disciplinary proposal writing. Consequently, the University faces insufficient research projects and funding, insufficient research grants and projects, and limited overall research funding to significantly finance research-related activities including research conduct, technology innovation, and research dissemination.

Policy Actions

The following proposed actions will address the above issues and gaps pertaining to the funding of research at UR:

(1) Increase the base of research funding through government but also through other diversified sources of funds.

(2) University of Rwanda is committed to supporting research by providing targeted funding to broaden the base of active researchers by facilitating access to seed funding to young researchers and female academics, including students, and building their profile so that they can be able to compete for external funding.

(3) Create and strengthen the writing of research grants by academics through competitive grants, local and international collaborations, and public and private sector partnerships.

(4) UR will train academics in writing proposals, identifying funding opportunities, and building international partnerships.

(5) Establish accountability mechanisms at the college level for academics with regard to their expected contribution in generating research projects.

(6) Ensure collaboration between researchers within or intra-colleges in developing research grants.

(7) The University will advocate for increased national research funding and explore opportunities for collaboration with government agencies, industry partners, international organizations, and other universities.

(8) University of Rwanda will forge strategic partnerships to leverage locally available research funding, international grants, and collaborative research opportunities that align with UR's research priorities and strengths.

Research Partnerships and Globalization of Research

The impact of research globalization is that the world is socially and economically interconnected. The UR will adopt methods for achieving its research mission through exposure to international best practices and benchmarking standards. This will allow the UR to stay

globally competitive while staying locally relevant. The UR must be a credible global partner to contribute to the fullest in their local environment – and vice versa. In contributing to global knowledge, the UR is open for partnerships as a means of driving its research agenda.

Policy Objective: Expand and diversify the network of national and international research partners.

Key policy issues:

In recognition of the paramount importance of international collaboration and partnership in fostering research excellence and addressing global challenges, University of Rwanda is committed to addressing the dual challenges of limited research partner institutions and organizations, as well as the complexities and conflicts inherent in diverse research expectations and demands.

Policy Actions

To tackle the above issues affecting the growth and benefits from partnerships, the following actions are provided by this policy:

(1) The University of Rwanda will proactively expand and diversify its network of national and international research partners through strategic alliances and collaborative agreement.
(2) Fostering mutually beneficial relationships with a broad spectrum of academic, research, and industry stakeholders.
(3) Promoting effective communication, implementing conflict resolution mechanisms, and fostering stakeholder engagement
(4) Mitigate potential conflicts of interest in research partnerships.
(5) Enhance and ensure effective collaboration to maximize the positive impact of international research partnerships on advancing academic excellence and addressing pressing societal needs, both regionally and globally.
(6) Foster the culture of partnership agreements than normal Memorandum of Understanding that are generic with no provisions re accountability.

Integration of Cross-cutting Areas

Policy Objective: greater consideration of cross-cutting areas such as inclusivity and gender equality in research and innovation at UR.

Key policy issues:

The University of Rwanda has other support policies to ensure adequate consideration of cross-cutting areas such as a gender equality policy and a policy on people with disabilities among others. However there are yet gaps and challenges that highlight the need for a

comprehensive approach to inclusivity and cross-cutting matters such as low female scientists' involvement or gender equality and equity.

Policy Actions:

To ensure appropriate consideration of the cross-cutting areas, the University of Rwanda through this policy provides for the following actions:

(1) Make possible adjustments to ensure that researchers with disabilities are not disadvantaged.
(2) UR to stare through the colleges the process of self-declaration of any disability in order to develop reasonable and well-adapted adjustments.
(3) UR will actively promote gender diversity in research by implementing initiatives to increase the representation and participation of female researchers across all academic disciplines.
(4) Put in place measures to ensure mentorship, support, and career development opportunities specifically tailored to the needs of female researchers. The university will strive to ensure equitable access to research funding, resources, and opportunities for researchers with disabilities.

6. Institutional Arrangement

This section provides the institutional arrangement that is needed to support and to ensure effective delivery of research and innovation at UR and dissemination to end users. The aim is to ensure that research is flexibly handled at the college level while the UR level plays a very strategic and light coordination role. A special focus is given on how the research should be managed at the college level with strategic links with the central governance of the Directorate of Research at UR. The following are key expected roles and details that shall be provided by the procedure's manual.

1. **DVC-AAR - University Level:** The DVC-AAR's Office oversees all activities on research and innovation at the UR and reports to the Vice Chancellor's Office.
2. **Directorate of Research and Innovation at UR level.** This unit at the UR level will provide policy and strategic orientation of research, quality assurance, and compliance with national and international research best practices including research ethics.
3. **Directorate of Research and Innovation at College level.** This unit oversees all research-related activities and operations at the college level along the office of the College Principal.
4. **Research Cluster.** This is the grouping of all researchers conducting research in areas that are clustered under the research cluster at college level. The research cluster can be made by more than one research group. The leadership of the cluster should be done at

least by a professor or Associate Professor who will be accountable for research leadership in the cluster, generation of research grants, and mentorship of young or junior academic and research staff.

5. **Research Group:** Research Groups are the primary unit responsible for organizing research and innovation at the school level. Research Groups help the UR to develop and profile groups with strong expertise in a specialized research or innovation area of interest and will help to ensure a culture of monitoring young researchers.

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