



## VILLA COLLEGE RESEARCH POLICY

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to strengthen research capacity and output of Villa College, as well as guide and accelerate the generation and application of knowledge creation through good research practice at Villa College. The policy also aims at achieving the objective of creating a research-focused academic community in the Maldives, as identified in the Strategic Plan of Villa College. As such, the objectives and purpose of the policy are:
- a) To ensure that research activities are in line with the vision and mission of the college and also respond to national (where applicable, international) research priorities while addressing the challenges of industry and society.
  - b) To help facilitate a conducive environment for research and innovations.
  - c) To enhance research management and coordination at all levels of the college.
  - d) To strengthen research and publications culture in the college.
  - e) To increase the output of research that can be commercialised.
  - f) To increase the efforts in seeking funding for research and innovations in areas that are prioritized by the college.
  - g) To foster research culture and ethics, including protection of research subjects, safeguarding the environment, acknowledging work done by others, copyrights and patents, integrity and honesty in arriving at research results.

## 2. Definitions

**Research:** The systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

**Innovation:** The process of translating an idea or invention into a good or service that creates value.

**Research Infrastructure:** refers to the facilities, resources and related services used by the College community to conduct research in their respective fields. Research Infrastructure may be physically located or distributed across the college or it may also be virtual (i.e. the service is provided digitally)

**Ethics:** These are norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

**Research Ethics:** Research ethics involves the application of fundamental ethical principles to scientific research practices.



**Visiting researcher:** researchers from outside the college who has interactions with researchers, colleagues and students and have access to college research resources, facilities and faculty, not otherwise available to the public.

**Supervisor:** Any academic staff member in a supervisory role with research students including co-supervisors

**Co-supervisor:** two or more research supervisors are appointed to supervise a student.

**Commercialization:** The process or activity of introducing novel products, process, or services into the market. An economic or societal gain is expected from the commercialization. The activity will require a substantial investment of time and resources.

### 3. Scope

- 3.1 Villa College is committed to conducting its research activities in accordance with the five guiding pillars quality, affordability, accessibility, flexibility and industry engagement and its research guiding principles, which includes conducting research of highest quality, developing excellent research academics, and have an impact beyond academic excellence. Moreover, in line with the vision and mission statements, Villa College aspires to be recognized as a leading higher education provider and center of excellence in conducting and disseminating knowledge and understanding through research and innovation.
- 3.2 This policy is also in line with and promote the strategic objective of fostering a research environment that encourages staff and students to undertake, and disseminate/showcase their research and inventions. It is expected that this policy will improve research planning and management, stimulate research resource and funds seeking, guide the relevance and responsiveness of research, ensure quality and ethical conduct, and increase dissemination of research outputs by Villa College students and staff.
- 3.3 This policy document provides guidelines on good practice in research and is intended for all staff including visiting researchers (hereafter called as researchers) and students carrying out research at or on behalf of the College. The aim of this policy document is to outline key elements of good research practice, underlying the principles of honesty, openness, transparency and research rigor that should be applied while planning and conducting research, and while recording, reporting and applying results which will lead to building a strong research culture at Villa College.
- 3.4 This Research policy will apply to all issues pertaining to research activities carried out by students and staff of Villa College, including research supervision, good conduct, intellectual



property and commercialization of intellectual property. This policy shall apply to all staff and students of Villa College and all users of its diverse resources for research.

## 4. Policy Principles

**4.1** Villa College recognizes that good research practice is built on proper planning, execution, recording, reporting, and dissemination of all research. These principles can be achieved if researchers at all levels are trained and supervised properly within a research culture that encourages frank discussion and debate. Research team leaders are responsible to ensure that researchers have the appropriate training and experience to carry out their duties as effectively as possible and see that a constructive atmosphere prevails in all research activities. Moreover, research supervision and monitoring are integral to ensure the quality of research practice which includes monitoring of training and supervision of new researchers and of continuing professional development. Thus, to achieve good research practice, this research policy is steered by the following guiding principles:

- a) Promoting research, innovation and excellence
- b) Responsiveness to needs and problems of the society and industry
- c) National development objectives and private sector involvement
- d) Policy harmony
- e) Research ethics, health and safety

## 5. Policy Description

Given that the objective of research policy is to provide guidance to ensure proper conduct in research and to develop capacity to generate new knowledge, the policy outlines a number of strategies and procedures for implementation. Thus, this policy document will give directives on policies relating to the following issues:

- a) Research coordination
- b) Research supervision & Training
- c) Research personnel
- d) Laboratory and equipment capabilities
- e) Research supporting environment and research culture
- f) Research grants/funds
- g) Integrity and ethics
- h) Research publication and dissemination of research results
- i) Intellectual property



## 5.1 Research coordination

- 5.1.1 Research challenges are multidimensional and hence require multidimensional solutions. This cannot be done without a proper body that will coordinate and harmonize all research activities including planning, sourcing of research funds, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- 5.1.2 To ensure that VC has a specific division or department or body (in this case, Institute for Research and Innovation - IRI) and mechanisms in place for coordination of all research activities including planning, proposal writing, searching for sources of funding, research implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of research results.
- 5.1.3 In order to strengthen research coordination at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:
- a) Mandate IRI to coordinate and manage all research activities including all aspects of student research
  - b) Mandate IRI to coordinate and manage staff-lead research planning, proposal writing, searching for sources of funding, research implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of research results.
  - c) Establish the Villa College Research Committee under the Academic Senate structure to assist the IRI in research coordination.
  - d) Establish subcommittees at Faculty, School and Centre levels to coordinate research and innovation activities.
- 5.1.4 The policy allows for special arrangements for faculties, schools, centres and institutes within Villa College to seek collaborative research with external partners. In such situations, IRI will be the overall coordinating body, while the relevant for faculties, schools, centres and institutes will have the responsibility to administer the day-to-day responsibilities of such projects.

## 5.2 Research Supervision and Training

- 5.2.1 Research training involves the active participation of both research candidates and their supervisors. The responsibility to ensure that research and research training undertaken by research students is conducted in the most beneficial, efficient and effective manner is shared by candidates, supervisors and college leaders. All parties are expected to work together towards completion of the candidate dissertation/thesis within the required time frame.
- 5.2.2 The purpose of this Policy is to specify good practices and expectations that support the highest quality research candidature experience and outcomes and to ensure the college's policies and



processes relating to research supervision and training are compliant with its strategic direction.

5.2.3 In order to strengthen research supervision and training at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:

- a) Mandate and empower the Villa College Research Committee to provide a framework of policies and procedures within which higher degree research and research supervision and training are carried out efficiently and effectively.
- b) Provide suitable academic infrastructure for the research to be undertaken and successfully completed and ensure higher degree research students are enrolled and managed within the Faculties.
- c) Allocate supervisors (and where needed, co-supervisors) for all students undertaking postgraduate research projects.
- d) Develop and implement systems and procedures to ensure that research supervision process is carried out with the highest level of professional competence.
- e) Ensure that appropriate training and direction of research and supervision of researchers is made available.
- f) Plan periodic courses or workshops and other opportunities to enable students and researchers to understand and adopt best practices in research. Supervisors should encourage students and colleagues to attend relevant courses or trainings whenever offered as a part of their overall career development. Some of the indicative courses could be: Research design, Regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, Equipment use, Record keeping, Data protection, Data management, Management of intellectual property, including confidential information, Regulations involving human subjects, using animals for experiments, etc.

## 5.3 Research personnel

5.3.1 The success of research and innovation depends largely on the adequacy and appropriateness of human resources. Thus, the level and discipline of training, the research experience, the motivation, innovativeness and adaptation to the dynamic world of science are essential ingredients of a successful research team.

5.3.2 To ensure that Villa College has the right number and right kind of researchers at the right time to ensure efficient and effective research productivity.

5.3.3 In order to strengthen research supervision & training at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:



- a) Recruit adequate numbers of qualified researchers who are well trained in disciplines that are appropriate for successfully carrying out various research projects.
- b) Train and orient young researchers to become future research team leaders, through training and mentoring opportunities.
- c) Establish an incentive scheme as strategy for retaining good researchers to ensure continuity of research programs.

## 5.4 Laboratory and equipment capabilities

- 5.4.1 The quantity and quality of research facilities such as research equipment, computer hardware and software and laboratories are essential for research productivity. Thus, enhancing the research facilities and fostering optimal use of available facilities will bring an enabling environment for enhanced research and innovation activities.
- 5.4.2 To ensure that Villa College has appropriate quantity and quality of research facilities that will sustain productive research.
- 5.4.3 In order to strengthen laboratory and equipment capabilities at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:
  - a) Strive to provide adequate and appropriate research facilities to students and staff researchers, including space, laboratories, computers and software.
  - b) Promote optimal utilization of available research facilities and equipment.
  - c) Ensure that research facilities and equipment are well maintained for optimal performance and sustainability.

## 5.5 Research supporting environment and research culture

- 5.5.1 For research activities to grow and produce findings that are useful for socio-economic development of Maldives, a strong research support environment and culture, both for the staff and students to conduct researches is crucial. The necessary research environment requires: appropriate remuneration to researchers, research funds, research facilities such as modern information management system, access to web based database and opportunities for the dissemination and publishing of research information.



- 5.5.2 Likewise, research culture reflects the values, ideals and beliefs about research within Villa College, which are reflected in the researcher behaviours, research actions and research symbols, which together will provide impetus for student and staff researchers to carry out high quality research.
- 5.5.3 To establish an environment that will stimulate and promote research productivity through provision of incentives to researchers, availability of communication facilities to allow access to and sharing of information as well and promote diffusion of research findings and develops performance enhancing organizational research culture which is manifested by shared or common research values, behaviours and perceptions which will be passed from one generation of researchers and students to the next.
- 5.5.4 In order to strengthen research supporting environment and research culture at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:
- a) Establish and maintain an enabling research environment that promotes innovation, production and stimulate exchange of ideas within the institution and with the outside world.
  - b) Foster a research culture and environment that will promote the development and maintenance of common or shared research values and behaviours that will catalyse productive research.
  - c) Encourage a climate of mutual cooperation in research, including the creation of research clusters and research groups.
  - d) Facilitate and provide opportunities for all researchers to develop their knowledge and skills in research and encourage open exchange of ideas.

## 5.6. Research Grants and Funds

- 5.6.1 Funding is the most critical constraint in research performance. The policy realizes the importance of securing sufficient funds for staff members to conduct meaningful research, to attend national and international meetings, and to contribute to the research income of the college.
- 5.6.2 To ensure availability of adequate research funding at Villa College through increased awareness of funding opportunities, increased grant applications and motivating successful applicants.
- 5.6.3 Villa College will also provide research grants to its staff to undertake relevant and useful research projects in order to enhance the functioning of the college and contribute to knowledge essential for development of the nation. The research grants will be administered as per the Villa College Research Grant Policy.
- 5.6.4 In order to strengthen research grants and funds at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:



- a) Facilitate the formation of multidisciplinary research teams and application for research grants from various funding agencies to continue to solicit research funds from diverse sources of funding, both nationally and internationally.
- b) Ensure that interested researchers at Villa College receive timely information about available research funding opportunities.
- c) Establish an incentive package for awarding researchers who succeed in winning research grants.

## 5.7 Integrity and ethics

- 5.7.1 The research and scholarly work produced by members of Villa College must be held in the highest regard and be seen as rigorous and honest. It is expected that such scholarly work is conducted in an exemplary fashion, with high quality and ethical standards, while promoting safety for research subjects, researchers and research facilities and contribute to the creation, application and refinement of knowledge.
- 5.7.2 To ensure that research conducted at Villa College complies with principles of ethics, integrity, quality and safety.
- 5.7.3 In order to strengthen research integrity and ethics at Villa College, the following institutional arrangements and processes must be put in place:
  - a) Mandate the Villa College Research Committee to enforce the application of various research governance regulations and procedures developed in line with this current policy and to ensure that research conducted at Villa College adheres to all aspects of research ethics, integrity, quality and safety as identified in this policy and subsequent regulations and procedures.

## 5.8 Research publication and dissemination of research results

- 5.8.1 Through dissemination of research results, Villa College can make knowledge contribution to the community and industry. However, some research results may need to be kept confidential for a period of time to allow for the contracting body to consider whether to protect the intellectual property and occasionally there may be research conducted where the results may be politically sensitive or have the potential of generating negative impact on both the researcher and the college.



5.8.2 To promote and enhance the diffusion of research outputs (publications and innovations) to target beneficiaries in a timely manner, with due consideration to any potential impacts and ramifications.

- a) Promote the timely publication of research by staff and students.
- b) Support and provide mechanisms for diffusion of innovations through technology transfer and commercialization
- c) Facilitate forums for debates and discussion of research results both within and outside Villa College, including conferences, seminars and other forums.
- d) Strengthen the culture of research publication through further establishing and consolidation of the Journal of Research and Innovation published by Villa College.
- e) Provide guidelines for the publication of research results.

## 5.9 Intellectual property

5.9.1 The policy recognizes that research has a significant role to play in providing solutions to problems facing the Maldivian society and industry. Thus, it is important to motivate, stimulate, capture and exploit the innovations through technology transfer and commercialization, amongst other possibilities.

5.9.2 To ensure that Villa College encourages, motivates, stimulates, captures and exploits the innovations discovered or developed through research conducted at the college.

- a) Encourage staff and student researchers to aim at developing research projects that will develop and promote innovations.
- b) Facilitate the identification and development of innovations for the benefit of Villa College as well as the targeted society or industry.
- c) Promote utilization of Intellectual Property information to promote research and innovation.
- d) Researchers must inform Institute for Research and Innovation of any intellectual property rights that may arise from externally funded research and also inform the sponsor, if they so request.

All such matters will be managed according to the intellectual property policies of Villa College.



## 6 Administrative matters and responsibilities

- 6.1 This policy shall be implemented and reviewed periodically by the Villa College Research Committee.
- 6.2 This Policy shall be implemented or supplemented in any way consistent with its terms and those of other policies of Villa College.
- 6.3 This Policy shall not apply to on-going research projects and written agreements between the Institution and any external organization or individual, entered into prior to the date on which this policy is adopted by the College Senate.
- 6.4 If an existing written agreement is renewed, revised, or amended after the date on which this Policy is adopted by the College Council, reasonable attempts shall be made to conform such agreement to the requirements of this Policy as of the date on which it is renewed, revised, or amended.
- 6.5 After the adoption of this policy, all relevant implementation guidelines and procedures need to be drawn by the Institute for Research and Innovation as per the guidance from Villa College Research Committee and the Senate.

## 7 Related Policies and Version Control

The following policies, procedures and guidelines are expected to be developed and implemented to effectively apply this current policy.

### Policies:

- a) Villa College Policy on Research Grants
- b) Villa College Policy on Research Integrity and Ethics
- c) Villa College Policy on Intellectual Property Arising out of Research Output

### Procedures:

- a) Procedures on Research Coordination
- b) Procedures on Research Coordination
- c) Procedures on Student Research Supervision
- d) Procedures on the Awarding and Management of Villa College Research Grants
- e) Archiving of research dissertations



## Guidelines:

- a) Guidelines on Research Supervision & Training
- b) Guidelines on Maintaining Research Facilities
- c) Guidelines on Developing a Research Culture
- d) Guidelines on Research Publication and Dissemination

## Related Policies

Version	Policy Name	Policy Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Status
1	Villa College Research Grant Policy	Policy no: VCAS / AR / PO / 2018 / 006.v1	29 August 2018	Academic Senate	

## Version History

Version	Policy Name	Policy Number	Approval Date	Approved by	Summary of Changes
1	Not Applicable				

