

# **UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**



## **RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

**APRIL 2024**

## **FOREWORD**

The University for Development Studies (UDS) recognises the pivotal role that research plays in driving human well-being and promoting sustainable development. As an institution committed to excellence in scholarship and innovation, we understand the importance of nurturing a vibrant research cadre equipped with the skills, knowledge, and support necessary to address complex challenges and seize opportunities to advance knowledge.

The Researcher Development Policy document represents a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to elevate the quality and impact of research conducted within our university. This policy builds upon the strong foundation laid by our existing research policies and strategic initiatives, underscoring our dedication to promoting a culture of research excellence and supporting the professional growth and development of our researchers at all career stages.

Importantly, this document fills a crucial gap by outlining the principles, objectives, and strategies necessary to cultivate a generation of skilled researchers capable of driving the socio-economic transformation of Ghana, as there seem to be no national policy tailored exclusively for researcher development in the country.

This policy document outlines clear guidelines to enhance the research capabilities of our academic community. From providing robust training and mentorship opportunities to promoting equitable employment practices and cultivating a supportive research environment, the policy sets forth a comprehensive framework designed to empower our researchers and enable them to reach their full potential.

As we embark on this journey of researcher development, I am confident that this policy will serve as a guide, inspiring collaboration, innovation, and excellence across our campuses. By embracing the principles outlined herein and working together as a cohesive community, we will advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute meaningfully to the broader goals of national and global development.

I sincerely appreciate all those who have contributed to the development of this policy document, including members of the research community, administrative staff, and external stakeholders. Your dedication and expertise have been instrumental in shaping this critical initiative, and I am deeply grateful for your invaluable contributions. Together, let us propel UDS to new heights of research distinction and make meaningful contributions to the betterment of society and the world.

Professor Seidu Al-hassan  
Vice-Chancellor

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Management of the University for Development Studies, in August 2023, initiated the development of a Researcher Development Policy under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor. This was a timely and strategic decision, as the University had been operating without such a policy. The Vice-Chancellor and the other members of Management are thus acknowledged for their vision and foresight in developing this document.

The successful completion of this document was made possible by the contributions of various staff members and individuals from the University whose efforts are gratefully acknowledged.

The University also appreciates the five-member committee that devoted their valuable time and expertise to developing this policy.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The tertiary education system produces research staff for every sector in each country by training thousands of researchers annually (NDHES, 2023). Consequently, many higher education institutions in developed countries have distinct policies for researcher development and general research. These policies usually align with a more comprehensive national policy for training and developing researchers. However, Ghana lacks such a policy, and the general policy on research is embedded in the broader national policy for science, technology, and innovation (STI) (MESTI, 2017). This necessitates the development of a researcher development policy for the University for Development Studies (UDS), as it aims to become a centre of excellence for scholarship, as articulated by the University's strategic plan (UDS, 2016).

This Researcher Development Policy is a sequel to the Research Policy of the UDS. The University prioritises research as a higher educational institution of learning. It also acknowledges that there must be a deliberate and well-thought-out strategy to produce the right kind of researchers for the socio-economic development and transformation of Ghana. While the Research Policy is designed to ensure that research is conducted to the highest ethical standards and generally guides the conduct of research at the UDS, this policy focuses on how to raise researchers, ranging from graduate students to early career researchers (ECRs) (collectively referred to as researchers), and advance the skills of established researchers<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2 Objectives and Scope of Application

This policy aims at grooming researchers and advancing the research skills of those already established by equipping them with soft or transferable skills (such as intellectual abilities, knowledge, techniques, and professional standards in research, as well as the personal qualities and skills to work in teams). It seeks to augment the research training and mentoring provided by the University. It is thus a strategy and a tool for developing world-class researchers. The policy has the following specific objectives:

- i. Provide research training and development opportunities for research students, ECRs, and established researchers.
- ii. Institute mentorship programmes and initiatives to up-skill ECRs.
- iii. Identify and define the areas that are essential for honing research skills.
- iv. Propose ways of translating the policy into action.

In terms of scope, the policy espouses the expectations of the University's stakeholders in the research training function of the University. Its application is fundamental to realising the research aim of the University. Thus, this policy is relevant to developers, trainers (managers, supervisors, principal or co-principal investigators), human resources specialists and career

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<sup>1</sup> By established researchers here we are loosely referring to the last two categories (i.e., established and leading researchers) of the European Commission's (2011) categorisation. [Available at: [https://cdn5.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy\\_library/towards\\_a\\_european\\_framework\\_for\\_research\\_careers\\_final.pdf](https://cdn5.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers_final.pdf)].

advisors in providing support for researchers' development and all academic staff and units involved in research within the University. Policymakers and funders of research will also find this helpful.

## **2. POLICY PRINCIPLES**

Three fundamental principles underpin this policy: (1) professional and career development being essential to enabling researchers to develop their full potential; (2) researchers being employed and managed under conditions that acknowledge and value their contributions; and (3) excellent research requiring a supportive and inclusive environment and culture.<sup>2</sup> The university or sponsor, managers of researchers/principal investigators/supervisors, and researchers themselves have obligations under each of the principles outlined next.

### **2.1 Principle 1: Professional and Career Development**

This principle enables researchers to realise their potential in pursuing diverse careers.

- a. The University must ensure:
  - i. provision of managers, supervisors, principal or co-principal investigators with the time, training, and organised assistance required for meaningful career growth evaluations with their researchers.
  - ii. researchers have access to experts in various careers for advice on career advancement.
  - iii. opportunities, structured support, motivation, and time are provided for researchers to participate in professional development activities for at least seven (7) days per year, recognising that they (researchers) will pursue careers in diverse sectors.
  - iv. shifting careers and working in different sectors are considered beneficial for researchers and facilitated accordingly.
  - v. researchers are allowed the time and space to develop their research identities and leadership abilities.
  - vi. the participation of researchers and their supervisors in professional development activities and career development reviews is monitored and recorded.
- b. Managers, principal or co-principal investigators or supervisors must ensure they:
  - i. assist researchers in exploring and getting ready for various careers by offering them resources such as training, secondments, and mentors.
  - ii. allow their researchers to participate in professional development activities for at least seven (7) days per year to help them balance their research delivery and personal development.
  - iii. enable their researchers to develop their research identities and leadership abilities by finding opportunities, providing extra time, and recognising and appreciating their efforts.
  - iv. engage in management and leadership development programmes to enhance their performance and foster a growth-oriented mindset in their careers.

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<sup>2</sup> The material in this section draws mainly from the Concordat (2019).

- v. conduct a career development review at least once a year and have frequent discussions about career growth with their researchers.
- c. Researchers are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:
- i. Identify and utilise opportunities to enhance their research and general leadership abilities.
  - ii. Investigate and prepare for career options by engaging with mentors, training programmes, secondments, and careers counsellors.
  - iii. Pursue career objectives and take responsibility for their career progression by undertaking at least seven (7) days of professional development activities annually.
  - iv. Actively participate in manager-led career development reviews.
  - v. Keep their professional career development plan current and compile a portfolio of proof of experience for supporting their job applications.

## **2.2 Principle 2: Employment**

This principle places a premium on merit-based, open, and transparent recruitment and promotion processes. It recognises the need for all stakeholders to commit to addressing challenges affecting the security of employment and promotion without any discrimination.

- a. The University must:
- i. implement hiring procedures that are inclusive, equitable, merit-based, and transparent to draw in top-notch researchers.
  - ii. establish open, accessible, and unambiguous pathways for promotion, reward, and merit-based recognition that consider the variety of personal situations and the breadth of contributions made by researchers.
  - iii. provide researchers with a comprehensive induction that covers policies and practices pertinent to their role and facilitates their integration into the community.
  - iv. offer supervisors of researchers, department heads, and others in analogous positions an opportunity for training on effective project management.
  - v. recognise researchers and their supervisors as important members of the institution's stakeholders and provide them with official avenues to participate in pertinent organisational decision-making and policy-based discourse.
  - vi. endeavour to increase researchers' job security by using open-ended contracts and more efficient redeployment procedures.
- b. Managers, principal/co-principal investigators or supervisors must ensure they:
- i. acquaint themselves with and adhere to institutional regulations, applicable employment laws and codes of conduct, and grant financing terms and conditions.
  - ii. foster transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in researchers' hiring, compensation, and promotion.
  - iii. pursue pertinent training and development programmes to enable them to supervise researchers effectively and uphold their duty of care.
  - iv. participate in opportunity-yielding platforms and discussions to help their organisation develop pertinent policies.

- v. participate actively with their researchers in positive performance management regularly.
- c. Researchers are expected to ensure they:
- i. comply with the guidelines set forth by their funder or sponsor and the employment laws, institutional regulations, and procedures.
  - ii. understand their responsibilities and reporting requirements.
  - iii. acknowledge and take responsibility for their position as important players in both their general academic community and their institution.
  - iv. interact positively with their supervisors during performance management evaluations and discussions.

### **2.3 Principle 3: Environment and Culture**

This principle is underpinned by the recognition that excellent research depends on a supportive and inclusive culture and a positive working environment. Such conditions attract and nurture multiplicity of workforce and positively impact individual and institutional performance.

- a. The University must ensure that:
- i. all stakeholders are aware of this policy.
  - ii. managers/supervisors of researchers receive adequate training on mental health and wellbeing, diversity, inclusion, and equality.
  - iii. researchers and their supervisors are informed of institutional rules and procedures that are relevant to them in a transparent, inclusive, and equitable manner.
  - iv. supervisors and researchers understand and adhere to the strictest guidelines of research integrity.
  - v. excellent mental health and wellbeing are promoted by managing workloads appropriately and implementing effective rules and practices to address bullying, harassment, and discrimination, including offering the right kind of support to aggrieved individuals.
  - vi. the state of the research environment and culture is assessed and reported regularly, including obtaining input from researchers to enhance institutional procedures.
- b. Managers, principal/co-principal investigators or supervisors must ensure that they:
- i. and their researchers adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct and research integrity.
  - ii. foster a positive work environment that promotes researchers' emotional and physical wellbeing by reporting and resolving any issues of discrimination, harassment, bullying, and poor research integrity.
  - iii. engage in relevant training and development programmes on inclusion, diversity, and equality, and implement these principles in their job.
  - iv. seize opportunities to contribute to developing policies that will enhance the institutional culture and create a research-befitting environment.
  - v. accommodate flexible working requests and other suitable arrangements to support researchers per institutional rules and statutory rights.



- c. Researchers are expected to ensure they:
- i. comply with funding and workplace policies about equality, diversity, inclusion, and research integrity.
  - ii. contribute to establishing and maintaining a more welcoming, equitable, and inclusive research culture, and extend support to colleagues, especially students and newly engaged researchers.
  - iii. report employees who do not behave as expected by using the available channels, especially in cases of discrimination, harassment, bullying, and research misconduct.
  - iv. seek opportunities to assist in formulating policies intended to improve the milieu and culture surrounding research at their organisation.
  - v. Take proactive steps to preserve their emotional and physical wellbeing.

### **3. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Successful policies or programmes incorporate mechanisms for tracking their progress to evaluate if they produce the intended outcomes and to inform policy or programme modifications. As such, the University will ensure:

- i. continuous monitoring of the implementation of this policy through a steering committee or the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research.
- ii. establish a mechanism for stakeholders to offer input on implementation of the policy. This feedback loop ensures the policy remains adaptable enough to respond to new demands and situations.
- iii. the policy shall be reviewed periodically by the University. However, it shall normally operate for at least five (5) years before a significant review occurs.
- iv. amendments to the policy shall be made through the Academic Board.

### **4. GOVERNANCE**

A structured governance system shall be in place to ensure the smooth operation of this policy. This is to ensure the achievement of the objectives of this policy. The University will thus ensure the following:

- i. Establishment of a steering committee (of not more than five (5) members, including a representative from each of the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research and the Graduate School) with suitable faculty representation and other important stakeholder groups to oversee the policy's implementation.
- ii. The committee shall report regularly (usually on annual basis) to the Vice-Chancellor on the progress of the policy's implementation.
- iii. The committee shall develop and publicise an implementation plan for this policy and ensure the plan is updated regularly.
- iv. The steering committee shall collaborate with pertinent stakeholders to establish a reliable and robust system for tracking researchers' careers to enhance the

understanding of career routes within and beyond academia and inform policy-related actions.

- v. The steering committee shall provide a forum for the exchange of best practices and promote this for the benefit of the research community and other stakeholders in the University.

## **5. OPERATIONALISATION OF THE POLICY**

Operationalising the policy translates its guiding concepts and principles into practical procedures and actions. Thus, for the University to foster quality research training and innovation, there must be a well-defined framework, clear guidelines, and active participation from stakeholders. The operationalisation of this policy shall be guided by the following:

- i. This policy shall become operational upon approval by the University's Governing Council on the advice of the Academic Board.
- ii. The University, through the steering committee or the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research, shall develop and roll out a plan specifying the procedure and implementation timelines and communicate this to all stakeholders within the University.
- iii. The policy shall be implemented to align with the University's mandate and strategic plan.
- iv. The steering committee shall devise a training plan outlining a set of suggested topics (Appendix A.1) to be covered in a typical training phase.
- v. The University, through the steering committee, shall specify core research development areas in a typical researcher development framework.
- vi. The University shall roll out a formal mentorship programme to advance the objectives of this policy.
- vii. The University shall set up and operate an internal research fund to catalyse the achievement of the objectives set out in this policy.
- viii. The University shall define clear consequences and sanctions for non-compliance with this policy.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Appendix A.1: Suggested List of Topics for Typical Research Training**

- Academic Writing for Publication
- Career Advice (ECRs and other researcher categories)
- Data Analytical Skills
- Data Management
- Developing a Research Team
- Gender Intersectionality in Development Research
- Giving Talks
- Grant Writing
- Interview Skills
- Introduction to Software/Platforms for Collaborative Research Projects
- Media Skills for Researchers
- Navigating Peer Review
- Networking/Partnerships for Researchers
- Open Research
- Professional Development and Career Planning
- Research Funding Strategies
- Research Project Management
- Writing for Impact