



Office of Research NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

Responsibilities and Functions of School Scientific Review Committees (SRCs) and External Reviewers

The School Scientific Review Committee (SRC) is responsible for evaluating the **scientific merit** of research conducted by core NSU faculty. This includes review of research proposals/research projects involving:

1. internal (e.g., CTRGC) and/or external research grant applications (in the case of the latter, only when required by the external agency as part of its application procedure, or as required by research collaboration governed by an inter-institutional memorandum of understanding—MOU);
2. biomedical (clinical, public health, pharmaceutical) and/or behavioural (e.g., anthropological economic, engineering, political, psychological, or sociological) research involving human subjects,
3. research involving animal care and use, and,
4. research for which appropriate level of laboratory biosafety is required (e.g., in relation to the degree of pathogenicity of microbial infectious agents)

Note: Categories of Prohibited Experiment (as needed, see *NSU Biosafety Manual*, version November 2022) include any research protocol that:

- enhances the harmful consequences of the agent or toxin
- disrupts immunity or the effectiveness of an immunization against the agent or toxin without clinical or agricultural justification
- confers to the agent or toxin resistance to clinically or agriculturally useful prophylactic or therapeutic interventions against that agent or toxin or facilitates their ability to evade detection methodologies
- increases the stability, transmissibility, or the ability to disseminate the agent or toxin
- alters the host range or tropism of the agent or toxin
- enhances the susceptibility of a host population to the agent or toxin
- generates or reconstitutes an eradicated or extinct agent or toxin

In accordance with the above prohibitions, only biomedical research requiring a *maximum of Biosafety Level 2* biosecurity/containment is permissible at NSU laboratories (subject to review by the NSU Biosafety Officer and/or NSU Institutional Biosafety Committee (NSU IBC) as warranted by the research protocol).

Faculty whose research or scholarship is based solely on engagement, review, and interpretation of classical or contemporary texts (e.g., English literature, historical studies engaged with archival research, philosophical or religious studies not involving human subjects) are not normally required to submit proposals for scientific merit review (*except in the case in which internal NSU CTRGC and/or external grant applications are involved*).

Faculty research proposals/research projects being reviewed for scientific merit by School Scientific Review Committees should satisfy standard expectations for best practices research methods in the respective discipline. As agreed by the Director, OR-NSU, and the School SRC Chairs, this includes:

- originality of the proposed research [maximum marks: 15]
- clarity and rationality of the research question, thesis, hypotheses [maximum marks: 15]
- literature review (assessment of relevant background materials and prior related studies) [maximum marks: 15]
- appropriateness of the research methodology (for statistical studies, adequacy of sampling procedure and valid plan for statistical analysis and data safety control and monitoring) [maximum marks: 15]
- potential impact of research findings, policy implications, contribution to existing knowledge [maximum marks: 15]
- potential for publication/dissemination of research results (especially SCOPUS-indexed or other indexed peer-reviewed venues) [maximum marks: 10]
- appropriateness of the proposed budget [maximum marks: 10]. Note: Review the itemized budget to assure line items and fund amounts are reasonably appropriate consistent with the research methods proposed (the SRC should reduce or eliminate any requested items whenever judged to be inappropriate).
 - Consistent with CTRGC policy, research projects should be capped at BDT 750,000 direct costs (there is no “overhead” or “indirect cost” component of these budgets). Inter-institutional research collaboration projects (i.e., those having co-investigators from institutions outside Bangladesh and/or proposed in line with an extant signed MOU) should have a maximum budget of BDT 10 Lac.
 - Note that any requested hardware (e.g., desktop computers/work station) should have an NSU IT review document included in the application (OR-NSU has included this document with the application) and the SRC should consider whether the hardware requested is reasonably appropriate and warranted by the research methods proposed. (Laptop computers are not allowable items in CTRGC research grant proposal budgets.)
 - Many proposals include a budget request for research assistants (RAs). Proposed salaries range from BDT10,000 to BDT35,000 monthly (the latter inordinately high). The SRC should determine a reasonable number of RAs allowable for the given project as well as a reasonable maximum salary amount for RAs, allowing for a salary differential according to whether the RA is an enrolled *undergraduate* student, an enrolled *graduate* student, or a bachelor-degree level or master-degree level *graduated* student.
 - Some proposals involving human subjects research include a budget request for “incentive payments” to participants. The SRC should assure that such payments are within a nominal range of BDT300-400 per participant. (Larger payments may be considered coercive of participation and, therefore, a violation of best practices in human subjects research.)
 - Only the School of Business and Economics faculty and the Department of Law faculty are allowed a “submission fee” line item in the proposed budget (it being understood that if this is included in the budget then the PI may not subsequently apply for an Article Processing Charges (APC) grant). Further, no budget should include an APC line item, since this is covered by a separate APC grant application once a manuscript resulting from the research project is submitted for publication.
 - Some budgets include a “miscellaneous” or “contingency” amount. This line item should not exceed BDT10,000 without appropriate justification. (Note:

Once a project begins, a PI can request the Director, OR-NSU, to authorize an internal re-allocation of the budget depending on unforeseen circumstances, e.g., inflationary costs.)

- Practicality of the proposed time frame [maximum marks: 5] (Note: All projects have an allowable one calendar year completion time frame; some proposals may have a proposed time frame of less than 12 months. Where the proposed time frame is less than one calendar year the SRC should state whether this is acceptable or whether it should be revised.)

Normally, depending on the number of grant applications for the School, the SRC review of applications should be conducted in one session, whether in person or online (or in hybrid mode). External reviewers should be included in the SRC's review deliberations only for the particular research proposal(s) s/he has reviewed (they should not be engaged in discussion and deliberation about other grant applications). The SRC will account for the external reviewer's written report (provided to the SRC from OR-NSU) and the external reviewer's assigned project score (including the point distribution across evaluation categories for a total score ≤ 100 points). Where there is a difference between the SRC total score and the external reviewer total score, the SRC should average the two scores and provide the average as the SRC's final total score on the given research proposal. (Note: Per prior agreement of School SRC Chairpersons, all Schools have a common threshold "passing"/"approve" score of 70 points.) The SRC evaluation should include a narrative paragraph justifying the SRC's recommendation (approve/reject) and its final score of the proposal (including the sub-category scores for the different elements of the research proposal).

In some cases, the SRC may judge a proposal/project mostly meritorious but subject to minor revisions. Accordingly, the SRC may assign a tentative total score and *tentatively approve, subject to revision*. In this case the SRC shall request revisions from the principal investigator (PI) (the PI shall be contacted by OR-NSU, given the current anonymization of the CTRGC research grant proposals). The PI will be afforded two weeks to resubmit the revised proposal to OR-NSU, which will then transmit the revised proposal to the SRC Chair. At the discretion of the School Dean and SRC Chair, a follow-up session of the SRC may be held for this set of proposals. Otherwise, the SRC may allow for the Dean and SRC Chairperson to review the revised proposals and provide the final determination (i.e., to approve or to reject).

The SRC shall issue its recommendation for each proposal/project on the template provided by OR-NSU. Each proposal shall be referenced according to the review code (e.g., CTRG-21-SBE-11) assigned by OR-NSU. The recommendation shall be one of the following: (1) *approve*, (2) *reject*. A scientific merit score (≤ 100) shall be assigned to each grant application.

When the SRC review of all proposals/projects is completed, the Chairperson of the SRC shall sign each report and transmit the SRC reports to the School Dean for his review and signature. The Dean shall then transmit the SRC report documents to the Director, Office of Research (in hard copy, in sealed envelope).

Note: Ideas, hypotheses, methods of analysis, and the narrative content and structure of the proposal are proprietary (i.e., the intellectual property of the principal investigator/co-investigators authoring the research proposal). All members of the SRC and the external reviewers are expected to abide by norms of research integrity, thus to protect the ideas and methods of proposals/projects reviewed against misuse or appropriation of ideas, methods of analysis, and the narrative content and structure of any research grant application for their own research endeavors or otherwise to be shared with third parties.