**QU-International Research Collaboration Co-Funds**

**(QU-IRCC)**

Call for Proposals

**Background**

As part of its latest 2018-2022 transformation strategy, Qatar University (QU) strives to become a world recognized research institution that drives multi- and interdisciplinary programs and maximizes research impact. This can be achieved by having access to state of the art facilities and through engagement with the brightest minds in different national and international research institutions. As institutions play a key role in encouraging and facilitating new collaborations, funding multi-institutional initiatives enables us to bring together the necessary expertise to address challenging research problems and encourage interdisciplinary research.

QU is currently ranked as a leading institution internationally in terms of global research partnerships, and is comprised with a diverse faculty who have the potential to infuse the academic and research activities with a global perspective, which complements the context of Qatar, that itself is an increasingly internationalized country. According to the past five years statistics, QU collaborated with 1787 worldwide institutions and around 4550 co-authored publications of which 2842 journal articles constituted the scholarly output from those collaborative research projects in different research themes[[1]](#footnote-1). The vast majority of those collaborations were funded through the National Priorities Research Program (NPRP), the main funding program of Qatar National Research Funds. This constituted an evidence that QU and the international collaborating institutions have clearly recognized that research is crucial to solving today’s major grand challenges faced in collaborating countries’ institutions and that the solutions increasingly require working across boundaries, disciplines and borders between nations.

Qatar has experienced over the past two decades considerable rates of economic, environmental and social changes. This has led to the emergence of issues such as air pollution, water and land resources; food and water security, identity and other socio-economic challenges. With the decrease in funding from various funding agencies in the different countries including Qatar and realizing that these issues are considered as international challenges, creating a new funding scheme like the **QU International Research Collaboration Co-Funds** **(QU-IRCC)** is forged by the need to provide opportunities for Qatar and the participating countries seeking solutions to these global challenges and to build on the existing strong collaborations.

Fostering further collaboration between Qatar university and other universities is essential not only for consolidation of research efforts in areas that are high-priority to Qatar and those countries, but is also critical for facilitating researcher and student exchange, and providing an easily accessible platform for research training to graduate students and postdocs. Such collaborations can be expanded thoughtfully, resulting in a collaborative research platform that will lead to wider consortium for innovation, discovery & scholarly advancement with highly specialized research units in various disciplines in Qatar & the other countries from which the entire globe will benefit.

Since people are at the center of international collaborations, **QU-IRCC** will support the best researchers from QU and the other participating universities from around the globe to develop high-quality, high-impact research partnerships, and open up opportunities for international researchers to access a greater pool of QU partners for joint R&D collaboration. QU shall work with other regional & international universities and research partners to overcome this issue through developing joint funding program like the **QU-IRCC** which aims to make it simpler for QU researchers to collaborate with excellent research partners around the world, by supporting enabling activities and reducing barriers.

Hence, the current co-funding initiative seeks to promote collaborative research across institutions from Qatar and different countries and establish a funding mechanism that is conducive in the initial stages to spur further collaboration. The initiative envisions laying a foundation for establishing research networks in key priority areas from which Qatar and the other countries will benefit.

The main strategy for enhancing such collaboration program/scheme focuses on:

* **Influence** - Building trusting relationships between key partners to align priorities and agree mutual areas of research interest.
* **Excellence** - Working with our international counterparts to support the highest quality joint research projects.
* **Impact** - Ensuring that the research we support can have an impact on the societies and economies of Qatar and the collaborating countries.
* **Responsibility** - Working with our global partners to support high quality research that tackles global challenges and has an impact beyond our two countries.

**Program Objectives**

As stated before, the objective **QU-IRCC** is to bring together QU and international researchers and innovators to collaborate on topics of mutual interest. There is a strong demand from the research and innovation community for a multilateral scheme, which would allow for societal challenges to be addressed, which is of benefit for Qatar and other countries. The **QU-IRCC** can be looked at as an instrument to pool resources at a multilateral level to support collaborative research and innovation projects. At the same time, the participating countries are providing funding only to their research and innovation partners. The **QU-IRCC** intends to develop a systematic approach to joint research and innovation activities between Qatar represented by QU and the participating countries’ universities. The **QU-IRCC** will pave the way for sustainable cooperation between research and innovation institutions in Qatar and the globe on the basis of the following activities:

* Implementing joint research and innovation activities
* Build national human capital in Qatar and the participating countries;
* Establish and enhance research collaboration between Qatar and international universities and institutions;
* Foster collaboration between researchers and develop research networks between Qatar and different countries;
* Developing new partnerships and strengthen existing ones
* Optimally utilize resources, infrastructure and expertise to the joint advantage of the region and the globe;
* Build trust, develop relationships across the countries’ institutions, learn from each other’s experiences, and help the advancing scientifically in a concerted manner to fulfill the Knowledge Based Economy aspiration of Qatar;
* Provide a vibrant cross-pollination research platform to students and researchers by creating exchange opportunities

**Research Thematic Areas & Funding**

Researchers from Qatar & worldwide institutions are encouraged to submit applications that align with the commonly identified grand challenges and research priorities, including basic and applied research. The four categories of research thematic areas & grand challenges tentatively suggested for the first round of collaborative proposals are:

1. *Energy, Environment & Resources Sustainability;*
2. *Social Change and Identity;*
3. *Population, Health & Wellness; and*
4. *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*

The subthemes and specific research topics under each thematic area for each funding cycle shall be decided by the **QU-IRCC** Scientific Council. The **QU-IRCC** will have one submission cycle per year, with funding ranging between US $80,000 – US $240,000 over 3 years with a maximum budget of US $80,000 per year. The funding for the second and the third year will be subjected to satisfactory performance of previous years assessed through submission of a formatted and structured annual report following rigorous peer-review process. The expected outcomes will be measured by different variables such as number of enrolled students, number of high ranked publications, intellectual property generated and activities of impact related to the industry and society.

The QU-GRCC Joint Reviewing Committee reserves the right to reduce the total budget requested by the LPI, based on the recommendations of the reviewers. If such proposals are funded, revisions in the submitted timeline and budget will be requested from the LPI and subsequently endorsed by the QU-IRCC Joint Reviewing Committee. Applications must include the following sections (in the specified order):

1. Title of the project.
2. Name and affiliation of the PI and Co-PI
3. Background and Significance
4. Specific aims
5. Research strategies
6. Deliverables
7. Expected societal/industrial impact
8. Student (undergraduate& graduate) and faculty engagement
9. Timeline, milestones and budget
10. References
11. 2 Page CV for each of the investigators
12. List of research grants obtained during the past 5 years by each investigator.

**Funds Allocation**

Each of the participating universities shall be directly responsible for dispersing and managing their share of funds allocated for the granted proposal as per the signed agreement. All supplies, equipment and consumables purchase related to research tasks and aims conducted at one of the collaborating institutes must be dispersed and covered from the contributing institution’s share of co-funding. Only travel, accommodation, honorariums, and training cost of researchers and exchanged students may be covered by the other collaborating institution’s budget when necessary.

**Intellectual Property (IP) & Revenue Sharing**

The participating institutions shall jointly own all IP generated during and within the scope of QU-IRCC agreement unless otherwise agreed in writing.

All Net Revenues generated as a result of the research activities contemplated in this QU-IRCC Agreement shall be equally shared between the participating institutions unless otherwise agreed upon in writing. For the purposes of this section, Net Revenue means gross revenue and proceeds received by a Party in consideration of a transfer, sale, grant of rights or a license for the Intellectual Property, less direct expenses including costs of securing or maintaining the registration of that Intellectual Property.

**Eligibility**

1. The Lead Principal Investigator (LPI) must be a full-time faculty member at one of the QU-GRCC participating university/institutions at the time of call for application.
2. The LPI must have a record of successful grants in one of major areas of research including but not limited to natural science, agriculture, medical & health sciences, humanities, arts, culture and engineering & technology as evidenced through prior funding and published articles in indexed journals.
3. In addition to the LPI, key investigator’s roles are limited to Co-PI.
4. The LPI is not eligible to apply for another QU-IRCC grant within this program if he /she has an active project in the program (except for the last year of the project).
5. The research team should consist of a minimum of two researchers and 1-2 graduate students from each institution; engagement of more than one institution per country in the same project is encouraged.
6. Faculty members who are departing in the year of the call for application award will not be eligible to apply.
7. Letter of commitment from partner institution will be required together with the application and at the time of submission of letter of intent.
8. The proposal submitted in response to this call for proposals (CFP) should have not been successfully funded by another funding program as financial double dipping is firmly prohibited.

**Timetable**

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| Pre-announcement of the call (on QU website) | 1 March 2018 |
| Launch of the Call for Proposals | 1 April 2017 |
| Deadline for proposal submission. | End of June 2018 |
| Eligibility check & Review Process Starts | First week of July 2018 |
| Online evaluations & Grant Review Results in | Mid-of September 2017 |
| Scientific Council Meeting | End-of September 2017 |
| QU-GRCC Joint Review Committee Meeting | End-of September 2017 |
| Awards Notification & Results to Applicants | Beginning of October 2018 |
| Preparation of funding contracts/funding decisions | October-December 2018 (As per countries’ regulations) |
| Start of projects | January 2019 |

**QU-IRCC** Scientific Council

The QU-GRCC Scientific Council is the governing body of the co-funding program which directs the scientific strategy and research priorities, themes an topic of the different cycles of the QU-GRCC Program. It acts on behalf of the scientific community in Qatar/QU and the participating countries/universities to prioritize the themes and areas of research that is of importance to Qatar and the collaborating countries.

The Scientific Council is composed of one eminent scientist and a representative from the office of VP for Graduate Studies and Research from each of QU and the collaborating institutions.

**QU-GRCC Joint Review Committee**

The Joint Review Committee (JRC) shall be established independently of any existing committee and within 7 days of the submission date.

1. The JRC will comprise of at least two representatives of each collaborative institutions’ research office;
2. Within 15 days of its establishment, the JRC shall:
   1. Serve as the point of contact for applications during the review process.
   2. Conduct initial review of applications for completeness and conformance to application requirements.
   3. Construct a list of eminent scientists and prominent scholars to act as reviewers.
   4. Ensure fair and unbiased evaluation of the scientific and technical merit of the proposed research after receiving results of the peer review process.
   5. Provide accurate summaries of the evaluation to assist in funding recommendations made by the Scientific Council and Directors.
3. The committee is entitled to seek independent advice from experts when and if necessary.

**Evaluation & Scoring**

For the technical and scientific evaluation, the JRC will solicit at least three reviewers from qualified international experts in the area of the research and will seek their input using the following listed criteria as a guide. The reviewers will score proposals based on six sets of criteria: significance; originality; approach/methodology; research team; research environment; and budget.

1. **Significance (Maximum 30 points**)**:** How significant is the research in advancing knowledge within its discipline, or across disciplines, and how relevant is the project to tackle the grand research challenges in both countries.
2. **Originality and content (Maximum 25 Points):** To what extent is the proposed research original, novel and topically relevant in relation to global publications and research trends?
3. **Approach/Methodology (Maximum 15 Points):** How well conceived and organized is the overall proposed project?
4. **Deliverables, sustainability and societal impact (Maximum 10 points):** Are the deliverables of the project realistic? Will the work be sustainable and lead to tools that will have a distinctive societal impact?  
   **Does the project include a clear component of education and training: (Maximum 10 points)** Does the project have a strong component promoting research training to undergraduate & graduate students and postdoctoral trainees?
5. **Qualifications of Research Team (Maximum 10 Points):**

How well qualified are the research teams, and are their designated roles appropriate for the application? (5 extra points will be given if the research team include one national PI or more)

1. Source: Elsevier's SciVal. <https://www.scival.com/home> Accessed November 8, 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)