

National Science, Technology and Innovation Plan

Regulations governing the management and follow up of projects

Vol. (7)

2012/1433

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Introduction

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has developed a long term vision of science, technology and innovation (STI) to create a “knowledge-based economy and society through a globally competitive national STI ecosystem”, thus achieving the Kingdom’s strategic goal of becoming one of the advanced countries in science, technology and innovation by 1445H (2025). One of the factors hopefully ensuring the achievement of this ambitious vision is the ongoing and growing support of the government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, to the STI sector, and the Saudi government’s determination to engage the Kingdom’s natural resources-based economy in comprehensive economic development, fueled with innovation and creativity, where the growing national human potential is invested according to a sound strategic plan.

Accordingly, the Royal Decree issued in 1406H (1985) directed KACST to “propose a national policy for the development of science, technology, and innovation, in addition to developing the necessary strategy and plan to implement this policy”. KACST’s achievements in this context began with the development of “the National Policy for Science and Technology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in 1423H (2002). It would embody the Kingdom’s vision and its fundamental strategic plans, ensuring the continuous sustained developmental efforts to enhance the STI ecosystem activities, all the while providing a framework of appropriate priorities, options and policies for each planning phase, building the Saudi knowledge-based economy and society.

To ensure the achievement of the national policy of science and technology strategy strategies, a national science, technology and innovation plan (NSTIP) was developed. The NSTIP consists of (8) strategic programs diverging into a number of projects to be co-executed by all national public and private Saudi economic sectors, so as to ensure the realization of the Kingdom’s long-term

vision, which reflects the vision of The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques of building a “knowledge-based economy and society through a world competitive national STI ecosystem” by 2025.

These regulations are part of a series of publications of the NSTIP General Secretariat, aiming to organize the administrative, technical and financial procedures of the national science, technology and innovation plan, and to determine the commitments and responsibilities of all parties involved with the implementation of its programs and projects.

Chapter I: Concepts and terms

Article 1: Purpose

These regulations are meant to establish the procedures to be followed for the management and follow up of projects carried out as part of the five year NSTIP plans.

Article 2: Concepts and terms

Unless otherwise implied by the context, the following concepts and terms shall be defined as follows:

- **KACST:** King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology.
- **NSTIP:** National Science, Technology and Innovation Plan.
- **Supervisory committee:** The committee supervising the national science, technology and innovation plan.
- **Preliminary committee:** A sub-committee reporting to the supervisory committee.
- **General secretariat:** the NSTIP General Secretariat.
- **Stakeholder:** Ministry or university or body of legal personality benefitting from NSTIP funding of a research or operational project, where the project is essentially being implemented within its facilities and buildings, which also includes individual parties in a direct funding contract.
- **Unit:** the stakeholder's science and technology unit.
- **Stakeholder's authority:** The stakeholder's official to whom the unit reports.
- **Scientific committee:** An expert committee reporting to the unit, to review and evaluate research projects.
- **Technical committee:** An expert committee reporting to the unit, to review and evaluate operational projects.

- **Financial committee:** An expert committee reporting to the unit, responsible for evaluating and approving tenders for the procurement of equipment and supplies approved for a given project, in coordination with the head researcher of research projects, or project manager of operational projects.
- **Strategic technologies:** Technologies determined by the NSTIP to be a strategic priority for the future of KSA development.
- **Program:** A set of research or operational projects related to any of the NSTIP programs.
- **Project:** A project can be either a research or an operational project:
 - a. **Research project:** A project dedicated to the thorough and comprehensive study of a specific topic. Conducting such a project requires the participation of a number of experts. It can be basic, applied or developmental research:
 1. Basic research: Experimental or theoretical work essentially conducted to acquire new knowledge related to phenomena and facts that can be grasped, which is not intended for any specific application.
 2. Applied research: Initial investigation seeking new knowledge aimed essentially at implementing a practical objective or purpose.
 3. Developmental research: A concerted effort to apply current knowledge derived from research or scientific expertise, to the production of new materials such as new products and equipment, intended to innovate new services, systems and operations, or drastically enhance existing ones.
 - b. **An operational project:** A project that is not a research activity in nature and that achieves the goals of any of the programs of the

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NSTIP five year plans, such as the ones involved with the development of science, technology and innovation (STI) policies and regulations, or the **development of research or service facilities such as laboratories, incubators, experiment stations** etc...

- **Unit director:** The person in charge of running the stakeholder's science and technology unit, who must be a Saudi national.
- **Program director:** The person in charge of managing and overseeing any of the unit's programs.
- **Project manager:** The person in charge of the administrative and financial aspects of the project.
- **Research proposal:** The comprehensive scientific and systematic description of the problem's: nature, importance, set solution objectives, qualified human resources, work methods, implementation time frame, requirements and capabilities-including financial cost- necessary to implement the suggested proposal, results and outputs of this research, and potential stakeholders benefiting from such research.
- **National task teams:** Single or multiple stakeholders' expert teams formed by the chairman of the supervisory committee to carry out a specific task.
- **Task team:** A task team including all individuals working on the project.
- **Research team:** A research team consists of the head researcher and the research associates only.
- **Head researcher:** A person with scientific and technical qualifications responsible for all scientific and technical activities of the research project.
- **Research associate:** A person with scientific and technical qualifications who participates in the research/activity being carried out, responsible for his specific assignment which relates to his area of expertise and experience.

- **Research assistant:** A person with scientific and technical qualifications assigned with activities that support the research team, such as conducting experiments, performing lab analysis, data collection, and other activities required by the project.
- **Graduate students:** Students enrolled in Masters or PhD or equivalent program in Saudi colleges and universities, or students on scholarships in new universities that don't have graduate programs in special and justifiable cases, whose area of study is directly related to their assigned work in the project.
- **Undergraduate students:** Undergraduate students or students of an equivalent program seeking to earn a Bachelor's or equivalent degree, whose area of study is related to the project.
- **Technical personnel:** Individuals with the technical and practical experience and qualifications necessary to perform the technical tasks required by the project.
- **Administrative personnel:** Individuals qualified to carry out different administrative tasks such as copying, secretarial work, accounting and coordination activities.
- **Craftsmen:** Artisans and craftsmen.
- **Consultant:** A qualified expert at providing consulting services or studies in the area pertaining to the project.
- **Review team:** A team consisting of 3-5 specialist and experts in the area pertaining to the operational project, in charge of reviewing the project proposals.
- **Evaluator:** Expert in charge of evaluating the performance of each project phase according to the specified requirement.

- **International evaluation:** An international body contracted to evaluate research project proposals and related annual and final technical reports.
- **Funding:** Financial support provided by the NSTIP to the stakeholder to implement a specific project among those approved by the supervisory committee according to the articles of these regulations.
- **Research project contract:** A formal document signed by the stakeholder's authority and the head researcher or the project manager to conduct the research project.
- **Operational project contract:** A formal document signed between KACST and the authority benefitting from one of the operational projects of the NSTIP programs and projects.
- **Project duration:** The time period set for the implementation of the project.
- **Forms:** Forms adopted by the NSTIP General Secretariat.
- **Scientific integrity rules:** Guidelines approved by the supervisory committee circulated to reporting units and bodies.
- **Scientific meetings:** Includes conferences, seminars, workshops, scientific summits, etc...
- **Scientific contributions:** Includes scientific papers, fliers and the chairmanship of scientific meeting sessions.
- **Online e-portal:** The official NSTIP electronic portal.
- **Administrative expenses:** Refers to the 7% percentage added to the approved budget, and allocated to the unit to monitor the stakeholder's funded projects.

Chapter II: Management of research projects

Article 3: General conditions regarding changes in the research team

1. In the case of a necessity, the head researcher can make changes to the research team, provided that he complies with:
 - a. The rules stipulated in these regulations.
 - b. The budget approved for the project, without any increase.
 - c. The set project goals.

Article 4: Head researcher withdrawal or replacement

2. In case the head researcher wishes to withdraw from the project before its completion, or in case the head researcher wishes to relinquish his responsibilities as head researcher, the following must be done:
 - a. The head researcher submits his request to the unit using the appropriate form including:
 - The reasons for the withdrawal/ replacement decision.
 - A technical and financial report on the elapsed project time.
 - Nomination of a replacement head researcher.
 - A written consent form from the replacement head researcher, along with the new candidate's CV and written commitment to assume all the inherent responsibilities of this position.
 - A written consent form from the research team to continue working under the leadership of the new head researcher.
 - A written consent from the unit and an official clearance form of the former head researcher.

- b. If none of the researchers of the research team wishes to take on the position of the head researcher, the unit can nominate a head researcher from outside the research team.
- c. The unit officially notifies the general secretariat of its decision.
- d. The technical and financial responsibilities of the head researcher become the responsibility of the deputy head researcher in case the head researcher quits the research projects for reasons beyond his control that are appreciated by the unit.
- e. The name of the head researcher's appearance on the research after withdrawal depends on the extent of assignments he accomplished during his work on the project, provided he accomplished at least 50% of his responsibilities. It is the unit's responsibility to follow this procedure and formally inform the general secretariat of the decision made with this regard.

Article 5: Relocation of the head researcher

1. In case the project's head researcher relocates away from the stakeholder through whom the project was submitted, to work for another stakeholder, either before or after the beginning of project implementation, then:
 - The head researcher continues to supervise and monitor the project for the stakeholder through whom the project was submitted, and he may continue to follow up on the project.
 - The head researcher may withdraw from the project or switch roles with any of the research associates according to the items of article 4 of these regulations.

Article 6: Withdrawal or replacement of a member of the research team

- If a research team member is no longer able to continue working with the project, the head researcher must officially notify the unit, using the appropriate form designated by the general secretariat:

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- a. A formal apology letter from the relevant research team member explaining his decision to withdraw from the project.
 - b. The unit reviews the request to withdraw, the reasons for the request and the appropriate compensation due according to the financial regulations in effect.
- In case the head researcher wishes to replace the withdrawn team member, the appropriate form must be submitted including the following information:
- a. The name and CV of the considered replacement.
 - b. A letter signed by the replacement candidate expressing his commitment to take on all the responsibilities of the former research team member.
 - c. The unit's authorization must be obtained.
 - d. The general secretariat must be notified of the unit's decision.

Article 7: Project extension

1. If a no-cost extension of time is needed to complete the project, the head researcher must submit a preliminary extension request to the unit 60 days before the project end date using the appropriate form approved by the general secretariat, including:
 - A financial report showing the outstanding balance of the project budget.
 - A technical plan for the extension period.
 - A detailed and scheduled budget for the extension period, excluding the research team or project manager's remuneration.
 - A budget increased cannot be requested for the extension period.
2. The general secretariat is notified of the unit's decision with justification.

3. The extension period is subject to the same technical and financial regulations governing the project performance during the original estimated time, provided it does not include any:
 - Remuneration for the researchers or the project manager.
 - Changes in the project goals.
 - Budget increase.
4. The project duration cannot be extended more than once.

Article 8: Project kick off delay or temporary suspension

1. The head researcher may request to delay the start date of the project implementation, or temporary suspension, before work is started and after the contract is signed once only and with the consent of the research team, in which case the unit's authorization must be obtained, taking the following into consideration:
 - The request to delay or suspend project kick-off must be submitted by the head researcher using the appropriate forms to the unit, stating the delay/suspension period provided it does not exceed 6 months, explaining the grounds for the request.
 - The unit reviews the request and formally responds to it, informing the general secretariat of its decision.
 - The unit takes into consideration the delay/suspension period when setting the deadlines for the project's technical and financial reports.
 - Project spending is suspended during the delay/suspension period.
 - The head researcher notifies the unit in writing of the resumption of the project once the delay/suspension period is finished.
 - If the project does not start after six months, the grant is cancelled and the general secretariat is notified.

Article 9: Transposition of budget items:

1. The head researcher may amend/transpose items of the project's approved budget using the appropriate form designated by the general secretariat, taking into consideration the following:
 - Budget line items can be transposed according to the rules set forth in this article, provided the amount transposed does not exceed 50% of the budget item, after the unit's authorization is obtained.
 - Transposition from any budget item to the equipment item is allowed.
 - Transposition is not allowed from any budget item to the human resources and travel items.
 - The budget may be changed twice only throughout the project duration, and according to the rules set forth above.
 - The unit has the authority to transpose budget items. The unit must inform the general secretariat of all decisions made, and the reasons for these decisions.

Article 10: Budget balance carry-over from the first fiscal year to the second fiscal year

1. The head researcher may request to carry over the outstanding balance of a first fiscal year's budget item to the second fiscal year budget item, pending the unit's authorization and informing the general secretariat of such decision.

Article 11: Project suspension or cancellation

1. The general secretariat/unit may cancel the research project for any of the following reasons:
 - Project implementation didn't start within the set period of time after the contract is signed.
 - The head researcher fails to cooperate in terms of responding to comments or questions of the general secretariat/unit in due time.

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- There's an ongoing or former project similar to the funded research project.
- The research team or consultants are changed or added without the prior consent of the general secretariat/unit.
- Project goals deviate or change.
- Technical and financial interim or final reports are not delivered to the general secretariat/unit on deadline.
- Delayed or temporarily suspended project is not launched in due time.
- Project implementation suffers from serious flaws or shortcomings compared to the project plan, as shown by the general secretariat's representatives' site visits, or as shown by the interim progress reports.
- Budget items are transposed without the prior consent of the general secretariat, with the exception of what is allowed by article 9 of these regulations.
- Failure to comply with the “Scientific Integrity Rules” published by the supervisory committee:
<http://www.kacst.edu.sa/en/about/stnp/Pages/forms.aspx>
- “Bioethics Regulations” were violated when handling living creatures or parts thereof or their genetic material:
<http://www.kacst.edu.sa/ar/depts/bioethics/1/Regul/Bioethic.Rgl.fin.aks.pdf>
- Failure to comply with the “NSTIP IP Policy” published by the supervisory committee.
<http://www.kacst.edu.sa/en/about/stnp/Pages/forms.aspx>

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- Absence of a replacement to fill in after the withdrawal of the head researcher, or the unwillingness of the research team to continue working with the new head researcher.
 - There's evidence of forgery, fraud or manipulation in the financial reports.
 - Rejection of the interim technical reports.
 - Conflict among the research team members inhibits the achievement of project goal.
2. In case of a research project cancellation, the research team is responsible for the consequences of cancellation as stated by article 12 of these regulations.

Article 12: Project suspension or cancellation procedures

1. If the general secretariat/unit decides to cancel a project then:
 - The research team will not receive any remuneration from the date the last technical report was approved. In case payment has already been made, the unit recovers what was paid.
 - The research team may not apply or participate with any research proposal for two to five years depending on the general secretariat's decision.

Chapter III: Projects Follow-up

Article 13: Rules of submitting projects follow-up reports

a. Research projects:

1. The head researcher commits to delivering interim technical and financial reports of the project's progress as follows:
 - The head researcher will deliver an interim technical and financial report to the unit every six months using the general secretariat's interim report forms, showing the technical progress achieved and the project's financial situation.
 - At the end of each Hijri calendar year, the head researcher submits to the unit annual technical and financial report of the year elapsed since the beginning of the project, using the general secretariat's appropriate forms.
 - Upon project completion (including potential extension period), the head researcher submits to the unit final technical and financial report meeting the general secretariat's requirements.
 - The general secretariat evaluates the final and annual technical reports of the projects then notifies the unit of its decisions.
 - The unit may request additional reports as needed.
2. The head researcher is obligated to make all the changes or amendments suggested by the general secretariat's recommendations and comments on the annual report, taking them into consideration when preparing the next technical report
3. The head researcher may delegate some of his responsibilities above mentioned to the project manager.

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4. In case the final report is not delivered on time, the general secretariat may deduct some or all of the research team's remuneration.
5. If an agreement is not reached on a common vision, the general secretariat has the right, in coordination with the unit to select another research team from the research staff (or other), to finish the project, or decide to cease funding of the project. The research team is in such case fully responsible for any consequences, including refunding received payments.

b. Operational projects:

1. The unit director, in coordination with the project manager, commits to delivering interim technical and financial reports of the project's progress to the general secretariat as follows:
 - Annual technical and financial report showing the project's achievements and performance using the general secretariat's forms within 30 days from the annual report's deadline.
 - Final comprehensive technical and financial reports showing the project's scientific achievements using the general secretariat's forms within 30 days from the final report's deadline.
 - All the previous reports must include all disbursement vouchers and signed contracts of each separate project.
2. The project manager commits to making all the changes or amendments suggested by the general secretariat's recommendations and comments on the annual report, taking them into consideration when preparing the next technical report.
3. In case the final report is not delivered on time, the general secretariat may deduct some or all of the project manager and the research team's remuneration.

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4. If an agreement is not reached on a common vision, the general secretariat has the right, in coordination with the unit to assign another project manager and a new research team, to finish the project, or may decide to cease funding of the project. **The project manager and the research team are in such case fully responsible for the consequences, including refunding payments disbursed to the research team.**

Article 14: Delayed report delivery

1. The head researcher may request to delay the financial or technical report's deadline on the following conditions:
 - The request is reasonably justified.
 - The deadline extension request is submitted 30 days before the original deadline.
 - The request is for no more than 30 days for annual or final reports.

Article 15: Project outputs

- The head researcher commits to delivering a copy of all the projects scientific outputs such as scientific papers, patents and others, to the unit, after publication.
- The unit provides the general secretariat a copy of all of the project's scientific outputs.

Article 16: Disclaimer

1. The head researcher and the researchers involved with the projects will not be cleared of responsibility until the project is cleared financially and technically, all the scientific outputs of the project are delivered (including patents, scientific papers etc..) and the head researcher is notified of his clearance in writing.

Chapter IV: Regulations guidelines

Article 17: In the absence of a specific article

1. In matters where there is no specific related article in these regulations, KACST effective rules, or any stakeholder effective rules, or decisions issued by the supervisory committee shall be followed.

Article 18: The right to interpret or amend article items

1. The supervisory committee has the sole right to interpret or amend any items in these articles. Subsequent decisions or regulations issued by the supervisory committee related to projects' progress shall be considered an integral part of these articles.

Article 19: Applying the regulations

1. These regulations apply to all projects with NSTIP support, effective from the date these regulations are adopted, and shall supersede any previous regulations or instructions, overriding any conflicting rules or exemptions.
2. These regulations shall be updated every five years from the date they are issued or as needed.