OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR NEW FACULTY SEED GRANT - 2023

Purpose: New Faculty Seed Grant (NFSG), instituted to aspire the research motivated and bright faculty members to pursue high-quality research, is an initial support to the regular faculty members (Assistant Professors Grade-I and above), offered faculty positions with us since July 01, 2022 in Pilani, Goa, Hyderabad and Dubai campuses.

Application procedure:

1. Faculty members in the category mentioned above may apply for the NFSG Seed Grant in a prescribed format, through the Department Head

2. The deadline for submission of the NFSG project proposal is normally **six** months from the date of joining of the new faculty members. The proposal submission deadline will follow the below-mentioned timelines:

    For faculty members who joined **by Mar 31, 2023** against the offer made after July 01 2022*

    : Submission deadline is Oct 30, 2023.

    For the rest, the same is **Dec 31, 2023**. Henceforth the deadlines for proposal submission will be the last day of April, Aug and December of every year.

    Faculty members who were not in the purview of the last call of the Additional Competitive Research Grant scheme may wish to apply for NFSG and will be considered based on basic eligibility criteria.

3. ***Application & Evaluation process*:**

    I.   The faculty member will submit a detailed research proposal (using a specific format which will be available on the SRCD/FAD website), to the Head of the Department (HOD), outlining the background of the area of research, an unambiguous statement of the problem, defined objectives and expected outcomes

    II. The HOD will endorse the proposal and forward all seed grant proposals to the office of Associate Dean, FAD. The proposal will be subsequently, forwarded by the office of Associate Dean FAD to the office of Associate Dean, SRCD for further processing.

    III. The campus Director will form a committee called New Faculty Seed Grant Committee (NFSGC). The composition of the committee is to be decided by the Campus Director, which should have equal representation of Engineering/Science/Humanities faculty members, preferably at the level of Professor.

    IV. The NFSGC will evaluate the proposal, and the PI will be asked for a short presentation.

    V.   If the NFSG proposal amount exceeds 10 lakhs, it will undergo an external review. A pool of external reviewers will be created for this by the Departments. The external examiner will be expected to rate from A to E (with A being the highest) and provide some qualitative comments.

    VI. Based on the recommendations received from NFSG committee members and the external experts (wherever applicable), the campus Director will approve the FSG proposal and order for the release of the Faculty Seed Grant amount.

4. ***Selection criteria:*** The selection of an NFSG proposal will be purely based on merit and its relevance in the current context. The proposed plan of research
    1. should be sustainable and preferably belongs to the thrust areas of departmental research or university research.
    2. should embrace achievable research goals with identifiable outcomes like publications, patent filing, PhD student supervising and igniting new collaborations at national and international levels.
    3. Has the potential to attract external funding.

Funding and Budget:

1. The funding of New Faculty Seed Grant (NFSG) is variable in nature. The Grant amount will vary depending on the faculty member's need for equipment, consumables and manpower, with a maximum cap of Rs. 20 lakhs.
2. A matching/top up grant up to 20 lakhs may be provided to upgrade the proposed/sanctioned equipment associated with an externally funded proposal. The operational guidelines for this will be rolled out at a later point of time.
3. The NFSG grant will be released in two instalments over a period of two years in two FY unless it is meant for equipment purchase etc. which requires submission of budget plan for two years
4. Grant already allocated/committed (RIG/ACRG/OPERA**) may be adjusted against the maximum cap of NFSG. ***Faculty members with OPERA are entitled to receive a monthly honorarium which will continue for 36 months counted from the first month of execution of the award.*

Project Duration and Reporting:

1. The duration of the NFSG is 2 years.
2. The grant amount will be released in 2 installments in two FY.
3. The Principal Investigator (PI) is required to submit the Statement-Of-Expenditure (SOE) and Utilization Certificate (UC) to SRCD after the completion of the first year and seek the release of the 2nd quantum of fund support. It is proposed that the unused money may be carried forward or adjusted against the 2nd installment.
4. At the end, the PI is required to submit the project completion report in the prescribed format (format will be shared on the SRCD website) along with the SOE and UC of the total cost of the project.
5. The progress of the research project may be reviewed by an internal committee in an annual basis which will be designed by the two interfacing divisions, SRCD and FAD.
6. PIs are advised to acknowledge the research support received from the New Faculty Seed Research Grant in their journal publications, workshop/conference proceedings and in places wherever applicable.

Guidelines of expenditure:

1. The funds may be used to purchase specialized research equipment* (maximum 80% of the grant), computers, workstations, tablets, printers, databases, servers, storage systems, network equipment, software and laboratory supplies (chemicals/glasswares/plasticware), sample collection and analysis, and all routine contingency items.

   *If two or more faculty members wish to combine their equipment grant to procure major equipment,

it may be considered.

2. The funds may also be used to buy books and subscribe to journals unavailable at BITS.

3. The funds may be used to travel to technical conferences/ workshops/ symposium or for travel for the purpose of data collection, meetings, or to initiate collaborations. (Maximum 10% of the total grant)

4. The fund can partly be used to give fellowship to UG and ME students working on the project problem but not to the PhD students. (Maximum 15% of the total grant)

5. (a) No formal approval from SRCD/FAD/Dean Admin/Director is required if the expenditure (for purchases of materials like lab consumables, contingency items etc.) is below Rs. 25,000. Further, in a semester cumulative amount should not be more than Rs. 1.5 lakhs.

   (b) Formal approval from SRCD/FAD/Dean Admin/Director is required if the expenditure exceeds Rs. 25,000.

6. The necessary NFA formats will be made available to the PIs by the SRCD/FAD in their website.

7. The unspent amount of the NFSG grant will NOT be carried forward after the project completion period.

8. The PI has to ensure that equipment is available for other users in the institute.

Dissemination of Research and Publications:

1. It is expected that the faculty members availing NFSG should be ready with one grant proposal at the end of the first year which may be used as a precursor for a substantial proposal after completion of NFSG.

2. The NFSG PI should publish their works in peer-reviewed Journals and International/National repute conference proceedings.

3. PI will be able to collaborate with people outside BITS Pilani.

4. PI will acknowledge the NFSG support in their journal publications and workshop/conference proceedings.

Abbreviations:

NFSG : New Faculty Seed Grant

NFSGC : New Faculty Seed Grant Committee

FAD :   Faculty Affairs Division

SRCD: Sponsored Research and Consultancy Division

RIG: Research Initiation Grant

ACRG: Additional Competitive Research Grant

HOD: Head of the Department

SOE: Statement of Expenditure

UC: Utilization Certificate

FY: Financial Years

NFA: Note for Approval