



Institutional Research Grants

Guidelines for Applicants

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1. Background

UNIMA recognises the vital role of research in advancing knowledge, addressing societal challenges, and enhancing the institution’s academic reputation. The Institutional Research Grants Scheme for academic staff members aims to foster a research culture and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration. Interdisciplinary research is essential for tackling complex societal issues that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. This initiative complements UNIMA’s strategic objectives by promoting excellence in research, fostering cross-disciplinary partnerships, and enhancing research capacity among academic staff.

The university seeks to fund projects that mobilise knowledge, promote interdisciplinary methodologies and multidisciplinary collaboration within and across schools, generating innovative solutions with significant impact. These projects will strengthen capacity and research leadership by providing mentorship to early-career researchers.

The Grants provide seed funding to generate preliminary findings, enabling researchers to pursue larger external funding opportunities, diversify their research portfolios, and expand their research networks. In this regard, the Institutional Research Grants will provide a platform for integrating perspectives to develop high-quality, interdisciplinary, and innovative applications targeting priority research areas for submission to other funding programmes.

The Grants are broadly themed, and applications will be accepted that address the national challenges outlined in the MW2063 strategy, the themes listed in the National Research Agenda, and cover the disciplines within the university. Applicants are encouraged to consider an approach that goes beyond a single discipline or research area.

A series of pre-application support activities — including an information session, a grant-writing workshop, and networking opportunities — will help applicants develop robust proposals (see Appendix 3 for schedule and details). Successful applicants will participate in a kick-off workshop to refine project plans and build a collaborative network.

Key Scheme Parameters

Parameter	Detail
Maximum award per project	MK 40,000,000
Project duration	Up to 24 months
Earliest start date	1 August 2026
Latest start date	1 November 2026
Application deadline	30 May 2026 at 15:00 CAT
Submission	By email to grants@unima.ac.mw
Currency	All costs in Malawi Kwacha (MK)
Number of awards (indicative)	5–8, depending on quality and budget availability

Information and specifications about the programme, reference documents, templates, and guidelines are available at www.research.unima.ac.mw/funding.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Employment

Only UNIMA academic staff members are eligible to submit applications. All team members must be ordinarily full-time academic staff members of the University of Malawi.

2.2 Experience and Qualifications (Principal Investigator Only)

The Principal Investigator (PI) must:

- hold a doctoral degree (PhD or equivalent);
- have demonstrable experience in research and grant management;
- have at least one peer-reviewed publication within the last three years; and
- hold a post that is expected to remain in place for the duration of the project.

2.3 Project Teams

Applicants must apply as groups/teams with members from **at least three different departments** (inter-school teams are strongly encouraged to include at least one member at the lecturer level. Teams should have a clear rationale for each member's inclusion, balancing breadth of expertise against the risk of fragmentation.

2.4 Gender Inclusion

Gender-balanced representation in project team composition is a requirement. Specifically:

- The team must have some membership from the underrepresented gender within the relevant discipline(s).
- The research design must include a **gender analysis** where relevant: applicants should explain how gender dimensions are integrated into their research questions, methodology, and expected outputs.
- Targets in the Results Framework must be **disaggregated by sex** (separate Female and Male columns) where applicable.
- Teams are encouraged to budget for at least one **gender-related activity** (e.g., a gender-focused training session, gender audit of research instruments, or consultation with gender experts).

Where gender balance cannot be achieved due to the composition of the relevant discipline, applicants must explain the steps taken and planned to address this imbalance.

2.5 Research Capacity Building

The Institutional Grants Scheme aims to build broad, sustainable institutional research capacity. Projects must promote mentorship and technical support, particularly for junior researchers, to enhance their research skills. The application must clearly state:

- which specific capacity gaps will be addressed and how mentorship will be structured (e.g., paired supervision, joint writing, methods training);
- what measurable capacity outcomes are expected (e.g., "two lecturers trained in qualitative data analysis"); and
- how capacity gains will be sustained after the grant period.

2.6 Multiple Applications

Only **one application** may be submitted per person per round. This applies to any person named as **Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, or Project Co-Lead**. A person may, however, appear on a second application in a supporting role (e.g., Specialist, Technician, or Professional Enabling Staff), provided their time commitment does not exceed 10% of total effort on the second project.

If a person is found to have submitted or been named as PI/Co-I/Co-Lead on more than one application, **all applications involving that person will be withdrawn**.

2.7 Outstanding Reports

Applicants must have no outstanding deliverables from prior UNIMA research grants. All outstanding reports must be submitted to the Research Office **before the application deadline**; otherwise, the application will be withdrawn without further notice.

2.8 Submission

The application must use the provided Application Form and be submitted by email, together with all required attachments, to grants@unima.ac.mw by the deadline stated above. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Each application will be assigned a **Project Reference Number** (format: UNIMA-IRG/2026/001) by the Research Office upon receipt, which should be used in all subsequent correspondence.

2.9 Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) to prepare funding applications is permitted. However, applicants must:

- declare any use of generative AI in Section 11 of the Application Form;
- specify which tool(s) were used, which sections they were used for, and
- take full responsibility for the accuracy and originality of all content submitted.

AI-generated content that is not declared, or that is found to be inaccurate or misleading, may result in the application being withdrawn or the award being revoked.

3. Assessment Process, Criteria, and Principles

3.1 Governance

The **University Research Committee (URC)** oversees the entire grants process — pre-award, assessment, award, and post-award. The URC is responsible for ensuring consistency, fairness, and alignment with UNIMA's strategic research priorities throughout the cycle.

3.2 Assessment Process

Applications are assessed through a three-stage process:

1. **Eligibility screening.** The Research Office checks each submission for completeness and compliance with the eligibility criteria in Section 2. Incomplete or ineligible applications are not forwarded to review.

2. **Expert review.** The URC invites **three independent experts** to review each eligible application in a **blind review process** against the evaluation criteria below. Reviewers score each criterion individually and provide written commentary. Where a proposal spans disciplines that require specialist knowledge, at least one reviewer will be drawn from outside the lead department.
3. **Panel assessment and ranking.** Following expert review, the full URC evaluates the evidence provided by the three reviewers, considers any applicant response (if a rebuttal stage is offered), assesses the overall quality of each application, and **ranks all applications** relative to one another. The URC then makes a funding recommendation to the Director of Research, who makes the final award decisions based on the available budget.

UNIMA reserves the right to modify the assessment process as needed to ensure quality and fairness.

3.3 Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Each application is scored against eight criteria. Reviewers score each criterion on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The overall score is a weighted average using the weights below.

Criterion	Weight	What Reviewers Will Consider
a) Scientific merit and innovation	20%	Originality and significance of the research questions; novelty of the approach; quality of the literature review; contribution to new ideas across disciplinary boundaries.
b) Conceptual clarity	20%	Clarity and coherence of the objectives; strength of the theoretical or conceptual framework; rigour and appropriateness of the chosen methodology and analysis framework.
c) Team capability and capacity building	15%	Quality of the interdisciplinary team; qualifications and track record relative to career stage; quality of mentorship plans for junior researchers; evidence of effective collaboration across departments or schools.
d) Potential for impact and knowledge translation	10%	Significance of the research problem for Malawi; plausibility of pathways from research to academic, policy, or societal impact; alignment with MW2063 and the National Research Agenda.
e) Dissemination strategy	10%	Quality and realism of the planned outputs (publications, datasets, policy briefs, events, etc.); appropriateness of dissemination channels for the intended audiences; open access plans.
f) Feasibility	5%	Realism of the work plan and timeline; adequacy of the Results Framework; identification and mitigation of risks; clarity of roles and responsibilities.
g) Gender and inclusion	10%	Gender balance in team composition; integration of gender dimensions into research design; inclusion of diverse and marginalised groups; use of an intersectional approach.
h) Budget justification and value for money	10%	Appropriateness of costs relative to proposed outputs; balance between activities and resources; quality of justification. Reviewers recognise that certain research methods are inherently more costly and will not penalise proposals solely on cost grounds.

Applicants are strongly advised to address each of these criteria explicitly in their **Case for Support** and **Application Form**, so that reviewers can readily locate the relevant evidence.

3.4 Principles of Assessment

UNIMA is committed to fair assessment and research integrity. In conducting its review processes, the University supports the **San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)** (<https://sfdora.org/read/>) and recognises the relationship between research assessment and the upholding of research integrity. In practice, this means:

- Reviewers will evaluate the **quality and significance of the research itself**, rather than relying on proxy measures such as journal impact factors or h-indices.
- Team capability will be assessed through the **R4RI narrative** (Section 11), which captures a broader range of contributions than a traditional publication list.
- Career stage and personal circumstances (e.g., career breaks, part-time working) will be considered when evaluating track record.

3.5 Timescale and Feedback

The URC aims to complete the assessment process within **two months** of the application deadline.

All applicants will receive written feedback based on a summary of the combined discussions during the assessment period. Please note that feedback provides a synthesis of the reviewers' and panel's assessment of your application; it does not include detailed reasons why a particular application was or was not selected for funding, as final ranking decisions reflect the comparative quality of the full applicant pool and available budget.

4. Application Guidance

The Application Form is the primary submission document. It should provide a concise but complete overview of the proposed research. **The Application Form captures summary-level information; the full details of your research proposal belong in the Case for Support (Section 5), which is submitted as a separate attachment.**

4.1 Overall Project Information

Indicate the School(s) and Department(s) in which your project is anchored.

Project Title — maximum 150 characters. Choose a title that is informative and accessible to non-specialists.

Project Dates — your project timeline must be within 24 months. Your start date must be no earlier than 1 August 2026 and no later than 1 November 2026.

Subject Area — enter the subject area most relevant to this proposal. For example: Education and Training; Health; Natural resources management, climate and environment; Economics and governance; Humanities, culture, media and communication.

4.2 Summary (550 words maximum)

Please give a simple, clear summary of your proposed research in plain English. It should be understandable to an informed public, not experts in your field. This summary will be published on the UNIMA website.

Clearly address: (a) the context and challenge your project tackles; (b) aims and objectives; (c) potential applications; and (d) the wider societal impact. Ensure that confidential information is not included.

4.3 Objectives (4,000 characters maximum)

List the objectives of your research in order of priority. These objectives must correspond directly to the Objectives (OBJ1, OBJ2, OBJ3, etc.) used in your Results Framework and Budget Template. Consistency of numbering across all documents is essential.

4.4 Beneficiaries

Summarise how your proposed research will add to knowledge within Malawi and globally. Identify all beneficiaries (including academic) and explain how they will benefit, along with dissemination plans. This section may be published; avoid confidential information.

4.5 Impact Summary (4,000 characters maximum)

Summarise the potential impact of your research. This may be published to demonstrate the impact of the University's research.

4.6 Summary of Resources Required

Provide a summary of your project costs and any other required resources. Ensure your proposed costs are within the **MK 40,000,000** budget ceiling and refer to the eligible costs in Appendix 2. All resources requested must be fully justified in the Justification of Resources attachment. **Items lacking justification will be excluded from the grant award.**

4.7 Project Administration and Partnership

Principal Investigator — enter full name and contact details.

Other team members — list all members and assign them roles: Project Co-Lead, Co-Investigator, Researcher, Specialist, Technician, Professional Enabling Staff, or Research and Innovation Associate.

ORCID identifier — all applicants (PI and Co-Investigators) must submit an ORCID. Register at <https://orcid.org/register>.

Project Partners / Other Participants — if you have secured a commitment from another organisation or funding source for additional resources, include details and attach a letter of support from each partner.

5. The Case for Support

The Case for Support (or Research Proposal) is submitted as a **separate attachment (maximum 5,000 words)**. It should be a self-contained description of the proposed work that does not depend on external links.

Important: The Application Form (Section 4) provides summary-level information intended for publication and quick reference. The Case for Support is where you present the full scholarly argument for your research. Avoid simply repeating the Application Form text; instead, provide the depth, references, and methodological detail that the form's word limits do not allow.

The Case for Support should be divided into the following sections:

a) Introduction and Context. Set the aims and objectives in context. Sketch the main prior work on which the research draws, with references. Include relevant policy or practical background. Explain how your proposed work aligns with the scheme's objectives and has potential for impact.

b) Research Questions. State the detailed research questions clearly.

c) Approach and Methodology. Explain how you will deliver the proposed work. Provide details of methodology, activities, timelines, and risk mitigation. Highlight innovative aspects of your methodology or areas where you plan to develop new approaches. Clearly outline the analysis framework and explain the choice of methods.

d) Planned Research Outputs. Indicate the expected outputs — both academic and user-oriented (articles, papers, datasets, events, policy briefs, etc.). Clearly specify the output type for each. This section should correspond to the Outputs/Deliverables in your Results Framework.

e) Pathways to Impact. Explain what steps you will take to ensure your research has maximum economic and societal impact.

f) Gender Dimensions. Explain how gender has been considered in research design, methodology, and analysis (see Section 2.4).

The bibliography for references cited in the proposal should be attached separately under "List of Publications." Do not include publications not cited in the proposal.

6. Planned Research Outputs and Open Access

6.1 Planned Research Outputs

Applicants should complete the Planned Research Outputs table in Section 5 of the Application Form, specifying for each output: the output type (e.g., journal article, book chapter, dataset, policy brief, training material, software/tool, exhibition/event), target audience, indicative timeline, and linked objective.

6.2 Open Access Policy

UNIMA is committed to ensuring that the results of publicly funded research are made available as widely as possible. Therefore:

- All peer-reviewed journal articles arising from UNIMA-funded research must be made available on **open access** within 12 months of publication, either through Gold open access (published in an open access journal) or Green open access (deposited in the UNIMA Institutional Repository or another recognised repository).
 - Article Processing Charges (APCs) for open access publication are **eligible costs** under this scheme and should be included in the budget where applicable.
 - Datasets generated through the project should be deposited in an appropriate repository (see Section 8 below).
 - The costs of data archiving and repository fees are eligible costs.
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7. Results Framework and Implementation Plan

7.1 Integrated Document

The Results Framework and Implementation Plan are submitted as a **single integrated Excel document** using the provided template. This document serves two purposes:

- **Results Framework:** articulating the logical chain from Impact → Objectives → Outputs/Deliverables → Activities, with indicators, baselines, targets, and means of verification.
- **Implementation Plan:** showing when each activity will take place (using the Gantt timeline of Q1–Q8, representing eight quarters over 24 months) and who is responsible.

7.2 Hierarchy

The results hierarchy used in this scheme is:

Level	Definition	Example
Impact	The long-term societal change the project contributes to	Improved food security in rural Malawi
Objective	What the project aims to achieve (must correspond to Section 4.3 of the Application Form)	OBJ1: Assess soil nutrient levels across three agro-ecological zones
Output / Deliverable	The direct products of project activities	OP1.1: Soil nutrient map published; OP1.2: Two journal articles
Activity	The specific actions taken to produce each output	A1.1.1: Collect soil samples from 200 sites

7.3 Numbering Convention

Use the following numbering: Objective 1 → Output 1.1, Output 1.2 → Activity 1.1.1, Activity 1.1.2, etc. These reference codes must match across the Results Framework and Budget Template (where each budget line is tagged to an activity code).

7.4 Indicators and Targets

- Where relevant, provide **both quantitative and qualitative indicators** (in separate columns in the template).

- All targets involving people (students, trainees, beneficiaries) must be **disaggregated by sex** (F/M), using the gender-split target columns provided in the template.
- Indicators should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

7.5 Budget Linkage

Each Activity row in the Results Framework includes a Budget Allocation cell that auto-populates from the Budget Template via the Activity Reference code. The Grand Total of the Results Framework should equal the Grand Total of the Budget. The template includes an automatic variance check.

8. Assessment of Sustainability and Cross-Cutting Issues

8.1 Strategic Alignment

Describe how the project aligns with the strategic research development plans of your School(s), Department(s), and Units, as well as MW2063 and the National Research Agenda. Explain how institutional capacity will be enhanced beyond the project period.

8.2 Ethical Issues

Demonstrate consideration of ethical implications. Answer the following:

- Are there special ethical issues not covered by the relevant professional Code of Practice?
- Has ethical approval been obtained (or will it be obtained) from the relevant authority?

If the project involves human participants, personal data, or sensitive topics, ethical approval must be secured before data collection begins. Ethical approval costs are an eligible expense.

In this section, the applicants should detail the ethical risks and mitigation strategies for their project.

8.3 Risks

Identify risk factors (both internal and external), analyse their likelihood and impact, and describe mitigation strategies. Present this as a risk matrix in the Application Form.

8.4 Digital Resources and Data Deposit

If your project generates digital data or resources, you must provide:

- A description of what data will be generated.
- Where and when it will be deposited (the **UNIMA Institutional Repository** is the default; other recognised repositories such as Figshare, Zenodo, or discipline-specific archives are also acceptable).
- how others will access the data.
- What restrictions, if any, will apply (e.g., for personal data governed by the Data Protection Act, 2024)?
- How will long-term preservation be ensured?

A Data Management Plan (maximum two sides of A4) must be attached for all projects that generate data. See Appendix 1 for guidance.

9. Required Resources and Budget

9.1 Budget Overview

The budget must be submitted using the **Budget Template** (Excel) available on the website. The maximum award is **MK 40,000,000** for a project period of up to 24 months. All costs must be in **Malawi Kwacha (MK)**.

A separate **Justification of Resources** narrative (maximum two sides of A4) must also be attached (see Appendix 4).

9.2 Relationship Between Application Form, Budget Template, and Results Framework

Document	What It Contains	Level of Detail
Application Form (Section 6)	Summary table of costs by category	High-level summary
Budget Template (Excel)	Line-by-line expenditure, linked to Activity codes	Full detail, with formulas
Justification of Resources	Narrative explaining why each cost is necessary	Explanatory narrative
Results Framework (Excel)	Budget allocation per activity (auto populated from Budget)	Aggregated by activity

All four documents must be consistent. The Budget Template Grand Total, the Application Form total, and the Results Framework Grand Total should all match.

9.3 Salary and Effort Rules

The following rules govern salary-related costs:

- **No payments** may be made to the Principal Investigator or any Co-Investigator for their own salary, time buyout, or replacement teaching.
- **Research Assistants, Technicians, and Interpreters** employed specifically for the project may be paid from the grant. Their hourly or monthly rates and the period of employment must be specified and justified.
- **Administrative support** to deliver project activities may be covered, but only on a fee-for-service basis (not as a salary top-up).
- **Consultancy fees** for specialist external expertise are eligible, provided the need is clearly justified and the rate is reasonable.

9.4 Co-Funding

These **grants** may be held alongside awards from other bodies, provided there is no duplication of expenditure. The Budget Template includes an “Other Funding” column to record amounts from co-founders. If the project is partially funded from other sources, this must be clearly explained.

See Appendix 2 for the full list of eligible and ineligible costs, as well as detailed financial guidelines.

10. Other Funding Sources

Applicants must declare any other grant applications submitted for this project, whether to the UNIMA Grants Scheme or any other funder. Applications submitted separately by different applicants will not be accepted if they pertain to the same project.

If simultaneous applications to this Scheme and another funding agency covering the same elements are both successful, the applicant will be asked to forfeit the UNIMA award, unless there is no duplication and no unnecessary inflation of the project.

Applicants must keep the Research Office informed of outcomes of any related applications by email to grants@unima.ac.mw. Failure to do so may jeopardise the application.

11. Applicant's Team and Capability to Deliver (R4RI)

Use the **Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI)** format to showcase your team's capability. This is completed in **Section 10 of the Application Form**.

11.1 Team Composition Summary

Provide a summary table listing each team member, their initials, and a short role descriptor (maximum 100 characters per person).

11.2 R4RI Modules (1,150 words total, including references)

Complete the following four modules as a narrative for the whole team. Do not format this as a CV.

Module 1: Contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies, or knowledge.

Describe how the team has contributed to generating new ideas, tools, methodologies, or knowledge. Include relevant research outputs and their significance.

Module 2: The development of others and maintenance of effective working relationships.

Describe how the team has developed others (e.g., mentorship, supervision, training) and how effective working relationships, including interdisciplinary collaboration, have been maintained.

Module 3: Contributions to the wider research and innovation community. Describe contributions to the broader research community (e.g., peer review, editorial work, committee membership, conference organisation, community engagement).

Module 4: Contributions to broader research/innovation, users and audiences, and towards wider societal benefit. Describe how the team's work has benefited users beyond academia (e.g., policy influence, public engagement, knowledge exchange, capacity building in Malawi).

11.3 Additions (optional, 500 words maximum)

Provide any further details relevant to your application (e.g., career breaks, secondments, part-time working). Do not use this section to describe additional skills, experiences, or outputs.

12. Additional Information

Any additional information that the applicant considers relevant for evaluation, and that has not been covered in other sections, may be included here.

13. Attachments

All attachments should be in single-spaced, 11-point font (Arial or equivalent) with margins of at least 2 cm. PDF format is advisable.

The following are **required for all applications**:

#	Attachment	Format	Notes
1	Case for Support	PDF	Maximum 5,000 words (see Section 5)
2	Justification of Resources	PDF	Maximum 2 sides of A4 (free flowing), see Appendix 3.
3	Budget Template	Excel (.xlsx)	Use provided template; must link to Results Framework
4	Results Framework & Implementation Plan	Excel (.xlsx)	Use provided template; integrated document
5	Data Management Plan	PDF	Maximum 2 sides of A4; see Appendix 1
6	Signed Letter of Commitment	PDF	Single letter with all signatures
7	References / List of Publications	PDF	Only references cited in the Case for Support
8	Letters of Support from Partner Organisations	PDF	If applicable

Note: The **R4RI** is completed within **Section 10 of the Application Form** itself, not as a separate attachment.

Appendix 1: Data Management Plan

The University recognises the importance of research data quality and provenance. The Data Management Plan (DMP) should outline how data will be managed from planning through the entire grant lifecycle until archiving.

UNIMA supports research as an open enterprise and is committed to ensuring that research outputs are made publicly available in a managed and responsible manner, with as few restrictions as possible.

When developing your DMP, address the following:

1. **Data description:** What data outputs will be generated? What formats will be used?
2. **Data collection and quality:** How will data quality be assured during collection and processing?
3. **Storage and security:** Where will data be stored during the project? What measures will protect sensitive data? (Note: Malawi's Electronic Transactions and Cyber Security Act, 2016, imposes obligations regarding personal data; applicants working with personal data should address compliance.)
4. **Access and sharing:** Where and when will data be made available? The UNIMA Institutional Repository (repository.unima.ac.mw) is the default deposit location. Discipline-specific repositories (e.g., GenBank for genomic data, PANGAEA for earth science data) are also acceptable.
5. **Restrictions:** Specify any limits on sharing (e.g., commercial interests, personal information, safety). Explain why restrictions are necessary and what access conditions will apply.
6. **Preservation:** How will datasets be preserved for long-term benefit? What metadata standards will be used?

There is no set format for DMPs. Organise your plan in the way that best suits your research.

Appendix 2: Financial Details and Eligible Costs

General Guidelines

All funding must be requested in **Malawi Kwacha (MK)**. The maximum award is **MK 40,000,000**.

Applicants should prepare realistic cost estimates and avoid overestimating. Since competition may be intense, conservatively budgeted proposals may fare better. Costs should be clearly itemised and justified in relation to the research programme. Grants are **cash-limited** with no scope for supplementary funding; projects must be fully costed from the outset.

Eligible Costs

The following costs are eligible:

- **Staff costs:** Research assistants, technicians, interpreters, and field assistants employed specifically for the project (specify rates and duration). Administrative support on a fee-for-service basis.
- **Travel and subsistence:** Local travel, South-South visits (for advancing research outputs, not conference attendance), visa costs. Specify destinations, purposes, durations, and per diem rates.
- **Equipment:** Computer hardware, specialist research equipment, and field instruments essential for obtaining pilot data. Individual items costing **MK 25,000,000 or more** must be entered separately and justified in detail. All equipment remains the property of UNIMA.
- **Consumables:** Datasets, photocopies, microfilms, laboratory supplies, and other items consumed during the project.
- **Specialist software** (excluding common office packages) and web development costs.
- **Workshop and networking costs:** Accommodation, room hire, catering, and materials for workshops that advance the research programme. This does not cover open-call conferences.
- **Consultancy fees:** For specialist external expertise, clearly justified.
- **Ethical approval costs.**
- **Open access publication costs:** Article Processing Charges (APCs) for open access journal publication.
- **Illustrative material:** Photography, cartography, draughtsmanship, reproduction rights (only if a publishing contract is in place).
- **Translation expenses.**
- **Data archiving and repository fees.**
- **Technical support access** at the university level (data management, statistical services, archives) on a fee-for-service basis.

Ineligible Costs

The following are **not eligible** under this scheme:

- Salary or time buyout for the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigators.
- Replacement teaching costs.
- Bench fees, departmental or institutional overhead charges.

- Conference registration fees (unless the conference is integral to the research programme and clearly justified).
- Membership or subscription costs.
- Medical insurance, excess baggage costs, or expenses for accompanying dependants.
- Writing-up time at another institution.
- Commonly available office software.

Any costs not explicitly listed above must be confirmed with the Research Office **before submission**. Costs deemed inadmissible or unreasonable will be deducted from the award.

Budget Template Guidance

The Budget Template (Excel) organises costs into five categories:

Category	Examples
A. Staff Costs	Research assistants, technicians, interpreters
B. Travel & Subsistence	Local travel, South-South visits, per diem, visas
C. Equipment	Hardware, instruments, field equipment
D. Other Directly Incurred Costs	Consumables, software, workshops, ethical approval, APCs
E. Directly Allocated Costs	Departmental support staff (share), technical support access

Each budget line must include:

- **Activity Reference** (matching the Results Framework, e.g., A1.1.1);
 - **Linked Objective** (OBJ1, OBJ2, etc.);
 - **Unit cost, quantity, and unit type** (per day, per month, etc.);
 - **Year 1 and Year 2 phasing**;
 - **Justification** (in the Justification column and/or the separate Justification of Resources narrative).
-

Appendix 3: Justification of Resources

Purpose

The Justification of Resources (JoR) is a mandatory attachment (maximum of 2 A4 sides). Its purpose is to help reviewers make an informed judgement on whether the resources you have requested are appropriate for the proposed research. The quality of your JoR directly affects your score under assessment criterion (h) “Budget justification and value for money” (10% of overall score).

What the JoR Is — and What It Is Not

The JoR is **not** simply a list of the items you are requesting — the Budget Template already provides that. If you simply use the JoR to list items without explanation, your application will be penalised, and items may be excluded from the award.

The JoR **is** a narrative document that explains **why** each resource is needed, considering the nature and complexity of the research. It should convince reviewers that the resources are appropriate, necessary, and represent value for money.

The Two Key Questions

For every cost in your Budget Template, the JoR must address two questions:

1. **Why is this resource needed for this project?** — Explain the link between the resource and the research activities.
2. **Why is the amount requested appropriate?** — Explain why the quantity, duration, rate, or specification is reasonable. You do not need to repeat the exact cost figures (these are in the Budget Template), but you must explain the rationale behind them.

How to Structure Your JoR

Organise your JoR to match the cost categories in the Budget Template. This makes it easy for reviewers to cross-check. For each category, address the justification guidance and consider the questions below:

Cost Category

A. Staff Costs
(Research Assistants, Technicians, Interpreters, Administrative Support)

B. Travel & Subsistence

What to Justify

Explain why each post is needed for the proposed work and why the proposed time input and grade level are appropriate.

Provide a breakdown: who is travelling, where, for how long, and why the visit is necessary. Specify per diem rates and how they were determined.

Questions to Consider

Is the work of sufficient scientific content or technical difficulty to warrant employing this person? Why this grade or rate? What specific tasks will they perform? Could the work be done by existing team members instead?

If visiting field sites or collaborators, explain why those are the right locations and what cannot be achieved remotely. If attending conferences, explain the advantages for the project and indicate the number of conferences, who will attend, and whether they are national or international. If undertaking a South-South visit, explain specifically how it advances the research

Cost Category	What to Justify	Questions to Consider
C. Equipment	Explain what each item is, why it is essential for obtaining pilot data, and why existing institutional equipment is insufficient.	outputs. Is equivalent equipment already available in the department? If so, why can it not be used? Will the equipment serve the project beyond the grant period? For high-value items, have you obtained comparative quotes?
D. Other Directly Incurred Costs (Consumables, software, workshops, ethical approval, APCs, consultancy, etc.)	Describe each item and explain why it is needed. For specialist items (e.g., software licences, consultancy), explain why existing institutional resources are not suitable.	For workshops: what is the research purpose, who will attend, and what outputs are expected? For consultancy: why is external expertise needed and what will the consultant deliver? For open access charges: which journals are targeted and what are the indicative APC rates?
E. Directly Allocated Costs (Departmental support staff, technical support access)	Explain the need for the resource and the amount of time or access requested. Charge-out rates do not need to be justified, but the need for the resource does.	What specific support will the department or technical service provide? Why is this access essential for the project?

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Reviewers frequently raise the following issues when assessing Justifications of Resources. Avoid these:

1. **Mismatch between Budget and JoR.** Costs that appear in the Budget Template but not in the JoR (or vice versa). Reviewers will cross-check the two documents.
 2. **Listing without explaining.** Simply naming an item (e.g., “travel to Lilongwe”) without explaining why the trip is necessary, what will be done there, and why it cannot be achieved otherwise.
 3. **Out-of-scope activities.** Requesting resources for activities outside the project (e.g., writing up at another institution, attending conferences unrelated to the research).
 4. **Unjustified time commitments.** Failing to explain why a team member needs the amount of time requested, or why a research assistant is needed for the specified duration.
 5. **Assuming knowledge.** Do not assume that a reviewer will know why you need a particular resource. Even if something seems obvious to you, state the justification explicitly.
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Appendix 4: Pre-Application Support Activities

UNIMA will provide the following support to prospective applicants. Attendance is strongly recommended but not mandatory.

Activity	Indicative Date	Description
Information Session	[Date — 8 weeks before deadline]	Overview of the scheme, eligibility, assessment criteria, Q&A with the Research Office.
Grant-Writing Workshop	[Date — 6 weeks before deadline]	Practical training on writing competitive proposals, developing results frameworks, and budgeting. Facilitated by experienced grant holders.
Networking Event	[Date — 5 weeks before deadline]	Structured networking to help researchers from different departments identify shared interests and form interdisciplinary teams.
One-to-One Clinics	[Dates — 3-4 weeks before deadline]	Optional 30-minute consultations with Research Office staff to review draft applications. Book via grants@unima.ac.mw
Kick-Off Workshop (awardees only)	[Date — within 4 weeks of award]	Mandatory workshop for successful applicants to refine project plans, meet other grantees, and build a collaborative network.

All events will be held on the UNIMA campus. Details and registration will be published on the call website.

For questions about these guidelines, contact researchsupport@unima.ac.mw