American University of Beirut – University Research Board (URB)

Faculty Research Grants Program (FRGP): Guidelines for 2027-28 Cycle

The University Research Board (URB) encourages and enhances research across all disciplines in accordance with the mission of the University. The URB promotes basic, innovative and applied research; interdisciplinary research; and production of scholarly and creative works. The URB recognizes the crucial importance of freedom of thought and expression to research excellence and the advancement of knowledge and serves as an advocate for adherence to high standards of research ethics, integrity and conduct.

The URB advises the Provost on the implementation of policies pertaining to research and research funding and recommends to the Provost the allocation of research funds from available University sources via the Faculty Research Grants Program (FRGP).

I. Objectives

The main objective of the FRGP is to enhance research across the University in terms of publications, creative work, intellectual property, and external funding by providing grant support on a competitive basis for novel research projects submitted by full-time faculty members holding professorial titles.

The FRGP acts as a research growth driver for the University via an outcome-driven review and funding model, whereby a major weight in the evaluation process is based on the outcomes of previous awarded URB grants. This model brings multiple benefits that include: i. enhancing the impact from awarded URB grants in terms of publications, creative work, intellectual property, outreach, and external funding from local, regional, and international sources; ii. reducing the review process overhead as it eliminates the requirement to have external international reviewers for all submitted proposals; iii. giving Faculties/Schools through Faculty Research Committees (FRCs) a broader role, e.g., by assigning higher priority to junior faculty members, providing research mentorship to faculty members, and encouraging research directions or forms of scholarship that fit within their strategic planning goals.

FRGP funding may also be awarded to complement funding for on-going projects (i.e., gap funding), as well as for projects involving new technology development that are close to commercialization (i.e., close to proof of concept). Scholarly outcomes from URB grants should acknowledge the support from the University Research Board.

II. General Guidelines

The URB manages one cycle of the FRGP annually. The URB works closely with FRCs on the implementation of the funding guidelines.

For this cycle, a grant can be up to $18,000 in annual funding for a research project period of one or two years, with funding approved on a yearly basis. The same ceiling and the same budget rules apply to all applicants in all disciplines. The amount requested should reflect the justified needs of the project, not the field of research; **most projects are not expected to require the full ceiling**. Awards may be lower than requested based on funding availability and expenditure eligibility. If a group project includes scholars from outside AUB, the URB funds can only be used to support research activities at AUB.

Eligibility: Full-time faculty members at any professorial rank (assistant, associate, and full professors) are eligible to apply. Faculty members who are on a leave without pay for more than

one semester during the grant's award period will not be eligible for funding. Visiting faculty members, faculty members in the non-professorial ranks, and faculty members in their terminal year at the University are not eligible for funding.

Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PIs: A faculty member may be PI for only one grant during a funding cycle. A grant can have only one PI. However, Co-PIs from AUB can be added by the PI in collaborative projects. Co-PIs are expected to make a notable contribution to the project and should contribute to the proposal and indicate their willingness to serve by signing the proposal submittal form. Members of the URB and the FRCs may submit proposals but must recuse themselves when their proposals are evaluated.

Reporting, Publications, and External Grant Submission: Recipients of FRGP funding are expected to generate scholarly output and/or apply to other funding sources based on the projects' research findings. These outcomes will form the basis for evaluating future submitted proposals.

Faculty members are required to submit final reports for awarded research proposals; the FRC Chair, URB Chair and Vice Provost for Research will have access to these reports. The final report should include for each of the specific aims a summary of the following: achievements (publications, papers under review, creative work, presentations, theses, dissemination and outreach, etc.) and encountered challenges.

The URB suggests using the following statement in the publications' acknowledgments section "This work was (fully or partially) supported by the University Research Board (Grant number: *URB award number*) at the American University of Beirut (AUB)."

Grant Renewals for Two-Year Projects: The renewal of grants that were approved for two years in the previous funding cycle will be subject to review and recommendation by the FRC based on a progress report. The progress report should summarize the following: work progress on the various specific aims, accomplishments to date, encountered challenges, and remaining activities with a revised timeline and revised budget for the second year; the budget amount and restrictions should follow the guidelines of the previous funding cycle. Renewals will not be permitted for grants that were not originally approved for two years.

Budget Guidelines:

The allowable budget categories include:

- The total annual budget per proposal cannot exceed $18,000. Within this ceiling, the limits below apply equally to all proposals, regardless of discipline.
- Personnel: graduate research assistant, research assistant, casual labor, or field worker only. Total amount cannot exceed $14,000 (expected personnel qualifications should be mentioned in the proposal). Consultants and experts can't be hired using URB funds.
- Direct research costs: all non-personnel categories listed below. All direct research costs must be justified accompanied with price quotations or documented cost estimates for each direct research cost item above $1,000; the FRC and the URB may reduce the award to the amount that is justified.
- Testing services at external laboratories. For technical services at external labs, the PIs should present a well-justified case and should make sure that the service is not available at the University. Total amount cannot exceed $2,000.
- Laboratory supplies, consumables and materials. Each item above $1,000 should be accompanied with a price quotations or documented cost estimate.
- Usage fees for AUB core facilities and shared instrumentation.

- Fieldwork and data collection costs, including surveys, participant compensation, transcription and translation services.
- Purchase of, or access to, datasets that are not available at AUB.
- Materials and production costs directly required for creative or performance-based scholarly work.
- Short term travel may be allowed (such as for the purpose of visiting special archival libraries or for the purpose of data collection). Total amount cannot exceed $3,000, and guidelines will be based on AUB's Travel policy[1].
- On-line access to specialized archives.
- Software that is well justified and for which AUB does not have license may be approved on exceptional basis; the PI should provide a confirmation from the IT faculty officer that no such license exists in the faculty/school or at AUB. Total amount cannot exceed $1500.
- Minor equipment that is well justified may be approved on exceptional basis. Total amount cannot exceed $300.
- Office supplies. Total amount cannot exceed $300.
- Cloud services, Cloud storage and Cloud computing cannot be covered by URB funds.
- AI tools. Total amount cannot exceed $200.

To be noted:

- Any leftover budget can't be transferred to the consecutive year.
- Any request to shift funds between different categories is approved on a case-by-case basis.
- Funds budgeted for direct research costs cannot be shifted to personnel.
- All items purchased using URB funding remain the property of AUB. Moreover, projects, which are proprietary in nature, are subject to AUB's Intellectual Property Policy[2].
- Unless explicit authorization is permitted in the award letter, grants cannot be used for the following expenditures: equipment, registration fees for conferences, workshops, or training courses; computers, tablets, smartphones, and accessories; books and publication costs; professional society membership fees; dissemination of research findings; faculty member salaries.

Publication Fees: The URB will allocate a separate budget to support mandatory publication fees for high-quality journals, in case the faculty member does not have an external grant or internal designated account that can be used for this purpose, with a maximum limit of $2,000 per paper and a limit of one paper per fiscal year. This includes journals ranked in the top 25% quartile (Q1) in their field (as ranked by Scopus and/or Clarivate JCR).

Process:

- The author should accompany the application with a proof that he/she has asked the publisher for waiver/discount on the total fees.
- The author should secure the respective FRC's approval by emailing the invoice (discounted if applicable), accepted manuscript and a statement such as "that no other funding source is designated for such purpose" to the FRC Chair

[1] https://aub.policytech.eu/dotNet/documents/?app=pt&source=unspecified&docid=177&public=true
[2] https://aub.policytech.eu/Search/Documents

– The URB approval process for payment of publication fees will be on a case-by-case basis considering recommendation from the FRC, in addition to eligibility guidelines and budget availability.

No-Cost Extensions: URB may approve on a case-by-case basis request for no-cost extensions for active grants. A request for no-cost extension must be made by the PI in writing *at least one month* prior to the end of the grant period, and must include a budget showing the remaining amount, and a justification including the progress of the project and the reason behind requesting a no-cost extension. Requests for no-cost extension will normally be approved for one-year projects or at the end of the second year for two-year projects. A no-cost extension may be approved at the end of the first year for two-year projects only on an exceptional basis with strong justification and for a maximum period of three months. Faculty members who receive a no-cost extension longer than three months on their active grant cannot receive a new grant during the same year.

Maternity and Sick Leaves: In case of a university approved maternity or sick leave, a no-cost extension may be approved on a case-by-case basis for a 6-month period or to the equivalent university approved period. A request for no-cost extension must be made by the PI in writing at least one month prior to the end of the grant period (1st or 2nd year). The approval will be dependent on the project and whether such an extension is necessary to ensure that all deliverables will be met. A PI can apply for a new grant for the following year even if the approved no-cost extension is more than 3 months.

III. Submission Guidelines

Faculty members are required to adhere to the following guidelines when submitting their grant applications:

- Proposals can only be submitted through the Online Grants Proposal Submission System [https://grants.aub.edu.lb]. PIs should click the "New" button in the top menu and choose the "URB" option to initiate the submission process. After the proposal is submitted, all required signatures will be collected electronically.
- Proposals should be submitted before the deadline posted by the URB. FRCs can set earlier deadlines for proposal submissions in their Faculty/School.
- The FRC Chairs will have online access to all submitted proposals in their Faculty/School and, thus, will manage the review process using the URB Research Grants Review System.
- If the proposal involves human subjects, the PIs should declare so during submission and should apply to the Institutional Research Board (IRB) [http://www.aub.edu.lb/irb] for project approval preferably before submitting the proposal. If the proposal is funded, only personnel budget will be released until the needed IRB approval is secured.
- If the proposed research involves experimental animals, the PIs should declare so during submission and should apply to the Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) [http://www.aub.edu.lb/fm/medicalresearch/Pages/AnimalCareFacility.aspx] for project approval preferably before submitting the proposal. If the proposal is funded, only personnel budget will be released until the needed IACUC approval is secured.
- If the proposed research involves the use of radioactive or biohazardous material, the PIs should declare so during submission and should apply to the Health Physics Services Unit [https://www.aub.edu.lb/facilities/ehsrm/Pages/radiation.aspx] for a license preferably

before submitting the proposal. If the proposal is funded, only personnel budget will be released until the needed license is secured.

IV. Proposals Preparation Guidelines

The following is a list of sections that should be included in the research proposal, and the recommended length of each section. Overall, it is recommended that Sections 3 to 7 do not exceed 10 pages, based on a template with specific formatting instructions.

1. Cover page including title, duration, and research team with affiliations (PI and Co-PIs). The titles and roles of each investigator should be clearly described in the cover page too.

2. Abstract (up to 350 words): Briefly state the background, aims, significance of the project, methods.

3. Background (up to 2 pages): Describe the background to the proposal

critically evaluating the existing state-of-the-art and specifically discuss the gaps in knowledge the project intends to fill.

4.Specific aims: Enumerate and describe concisely the specific research aims of the project.

5. Significance: State the importance and relevance of each proposed goal and highlight its novel aspects, as applicable.

6. Methods (up to 3 pages): Describe the research methodology that will be used to investigate each specific aim, with in-depth details.

7. Preliminary studies and results, as applicable (up to 2 pages): Report any preliminary pertinent studies or information that can help in appraising the experience and competence of the investigators in relation to the proposed work.

8. Expected outcomes and impact (up to 1 page): Include an *itemized list* of all expected deliverables in terms of publications, creative works, intellectual property, outreach, partnerships, knowledge translation, and external grant submissions, as applicable. Be as specific as possible as these will be used as indicators for evaluating the final outcomes from the project.

9. Challenges and mitigation plan (1 page): Identify potential risks or obstacles that may affect the project and outline practical measures to anticipate, monitor, and address them to ensure successful implementation.

10. Roles: Include a description of the role of the PI and co-PIs, as applicable, towards the accomplishment of the proposed specific aims, in addition to the allocation of research tasks to personnel who will be paid from the project.

11. Timeline: Proposals should contain a schedule for the research activities and deliverables using one month time units; moreover, they should include a strong justification for requesting a two-year grant instead of one year based on the project's specific aims and methods of inquiry.

12. Budget: Include an itemized budget in US dollars per year with *clear justification* for each budget item in line with the budget categories and restrictions listed in the budget section. This should be detailed enough to allow judgment of appropriateness. Laboratory supplies, consumables and materials above $1,000 should be accompanied with a price quotations or documented cost estimate.

13. References: Include the list of bibliographic references used in the proposal.

Required Documents:

In addition to the proposal, the PI will be required to upload the following documents/information as part of the online submission process, as applicable:

- Curriculum vitae of the PI and Co-PIs.
- URB and other internally funded grants received by the PI from the last four cycles (2026-27, 2025-2026, 2024-2025, 2023-2024); for each grant, the PI should include title and duration. This information should be uploaded in the online proposal submission system directly from FMIS (Faculty Management Information System).
- Publications resulting from each of the above listed URB and other internally funded grants in the last four cycles; for each publication, the PI should include type, status, title, authors, date, venue, online link, in addition to uploading a pdf copy. This information should be uploaded in the URB online proposal submission system directly from FMIS. Up to five publications can be uploaded.
- Externally submitted grants by the PI (national, regional, and international sources) in the last four years (2026, 2025, 2024, 2023). For each grant, the PI should include title, funding agency/program, type, role, budget, duration, and status (awarded, not awarded, pending). This information should be uploaded in the URB online proposal submission system directly from FMIS.
- A list containing the names of three recommended reviewers, their affiliations, and contact details; the recommended reviewers should not be current or previous collaborators with any of the PI or Co-PIs.
- Optionally, a list of scholars that the PI does not want to be invited to review the proposal.

V. Proposals Review Process

The FRGP allocates funds to projects on a competitive basis. The overall review and evaluation process takes place in two phases: The first phase is managed by the FRCs whereas the second phase is managed by the URB based on evaluation reports submitted by FRCs, University wide evaluation metrics, and budget availability.

Role of the Faculty Research Committees (FRCs):

- FRC evaluates proposals according to the general guidelines listed in this document.
- FRC can also establish additional complementary guidelines specific to their Faculty/School. Before implementation, the FRC Chair should share these guidelines with the URB Chair and the Vice Provost for Research and communicate them with faculty members.
- FRC manages the complete review process using the online Research Grants Review System.
- The FRC Chair assigns each proposal two custodians from the FRC members, one of them as the primary custodian. The assignment should consider any potential conflicts of interest.
- The custodians' responsibilities include securing at least two confirmed reviewers per proposal (with at least one external), following up with the reviewers for timely submission, and generating a concise evaluation report. The URB will not consider applications without at least two reviewers (at least on external reviewer).
- The reviewers are asked to evaluate the application by providing a judgment on significance, innovation, methodology, and feasibility (please check appendix for reviewers' guidelines)

- Custodian(s) prepare an evaluation report summarizing the application and the review reports, and provide a judgment on significance, innovation, methodology, and feasibility
- At the time of the FRC meeting, and for each application, the custodian(s) present their evaluation report (ideally through a PowerPoint presentation).
- During the first FRC meeting, the committee gives the proposals an initial scientific merit score (guided by the reviewer's evaluation) and a "fitness" score (scoring methodology detailed in the Appendix). The scientific merit of the proposals should be assessed in relation to own Department or Faculty/School (i.e., in relation to the discipline).
- FRC sends the applicants the review reports, along with suggestions for enhancing the application, with an opportunity of rebutting (unless the FRC decides to triage out the application).
- After the resubmission of the revised applications, the FRC gives the proposals a final scientific merit score and a "fitness" score during its 2nd meeting.
- FRC prepares and submits to the Dean, cc'ing FRC members, a written report summarizing final scores, final ranking (based on scores) and funding recommendations.
- The Dean sends his/her recommendations to the URB Chair and the Vice Provost for Research by the deadline
- All discussions in FRC meetings are confidential. FRC members are asked to refrain strictly from discussing matters related to the submitted proposals and their evaluations with the applicants or others.
- Any FRC member who is applying for a URB grant should excuse him/herself from the meeting during the discussion of his/her own application.
- FRCs are encouraged to convene awardees mid-course, giving them the chance to present their progress to each other after receiving funding.

Role of the URB Committee:

- The URB Committee coordinates the review process with all FRCs for consistency and fairness, taking into account the forms/rubrics/metrics used for calculating both the scientific merit score and the fitness score.
- The URB Committee receives and studies the documentation submitted by the FRCs. The URB may require meeting with the FRC Chairs to discuss the evaluation and ranking of the proposals before making a final decision.
- The URB Committee selects the proposals to be funded based on the ranking and scores provided by the FRCs complemented with its own analysis and assessment taking into account the available total budget for the current funding cycle.
- Whenever needed, the committee has the right to conduct a revision and re-scoring and ranking, in collaboration with the corresponding FRC chairs.
- All discussions in URB meetings related to the funding decisions are confidential. URB members are asked to refrain strictly from discussing matters related to the submitted proposals and their evaluations with the applicants or others.
- The URB, with the support of Office of Research, should ensure that proposals are compliant with University policies for internal grants in terms of budget expenditures.

- The URB monitors, for each cycle, the number of applications, success rates and awarded amounts per Faculty/School and per budget category and reports them to the Provost. The budget ceilings in these guidelines will be reviewed on yearly basis.

  Proposals requesting two years of funding will be evaluated using the same process as one-year projects. Depending on the evaluation results and available budget, the outcome can be to fund for two years, to fund for one year only, or not to fund. Moreover, continued funding for two-year projects is contingent upon the submission to the FRC of a progress report on the outcomes and deliverables achieved during the previous year.
- The progress report must be evaluated by the FRC and approved prior to any further funding.
- Whenever made, the URB Committee's decisions are final. Funding will be allocated for the period July 1st to June 30th of the following year.
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VI. Principles of AI Use in Proposals Preparation and Revision

- When applicable, the use of AI in the preparation of proposals must be clearly acknowledged. PIs should also check AUB's guidelines on the responsible use of AI in research at https://www.aub.edu.lb/research/Pages/policies.aspx.

- It is strictly prohibited to upload full proposals or intellectual property content to any AI platform that stores, retains, or uses uploaded data to train its models or databases. This includes using such platforms for editing, reviewing, or identifying potential reviewers. Only AI tools that function as local or secure editors—without retaining or transmitting data externally—may be used, provided institutional data protection standards are met.

- To identify potential reviewers using AI tools, custodians may only upload limited, non-confidential information such as proposal titles, keywords, and references.

VII. Grant Management

The Office of Research is responsible for administering URB awards. The URB Officer will monitor the projects for administrative and financial compliance with the award conditions.

VIII. Timeline

The URB will strictly follow the timeline below for the FRGP 2027-28 Cycle.

Dates	Activity
Friday October 30, 2026	URB funding cycle announcement
Wednesday January 13, 2027 noon	New proposals submission deadline
Wednesday February 10, 2027 noon	Renewal proposals submission deadline
March (2nd week TBC), 2027	FRC Meeting 1
April (2nd week TBC), 2027	FRC Meeting 2
Monday May 3, 2027	FRC evaluation reports submission deadline
Monday May 10, 2027	URB evaluation process
Mid-June, 2027	Announce awards

Wednesday February 3, 2027	Final reports submission deadline (previous cycle)

IX. Resubmission Guidelines

Applicants whose proposals were not selected for funding may submit a revised application in a future grant cycle. Resubmission applications follow the same timeline as other applications. To ensure fairness and encourage continuous improvement in research quality, resubmissions must follow these guidelines:

Eligibility for Resubmission

- Only one resubmission per original application is allowed.
- Substantial revisions are expected. Simply re-submitting the original proposal without meaningful changes, or adding minor changes that don't address reviewers' comments, will lead to triaging out the application.

Required Documents

- *Resubmission Introduction (1 page max):* Outlines the changes made to the original application. The introduction must include a brief summary of substantial additions, deletions, and changes to the application. It must also include a response to weaknesses raised in the previous revision.
- *Revised Proposal*: The body of the proposal should be updated to reflect major improvements. All significant changes must be integrated into the main text, not only mentioned in the introduction.

X. Appendix

Review Guidelines

- Reviewers cannot be current collaborators with the PI or Co-PIs and should remain anonymous to the applicants.
- Reviewers can be from AUB and/or from outside AUB (at least one external) and can include members of the FRC.
- Reviewers should be notified that their anonymous comments will be shared with applicants.
- Reviewers are encouraged to provide constructive feedback i.e. for any limitation noted, a suggestion for improvement should be provided
- Reviewers are strictly prohibited from uploading proposals or any related materials to generative AI platforms, particularly those that store, process, or use uploaded data for model training or external purposes, as this may violate the authors' confidentiality and proprietary rights and, where the paper contains personally identifiable information, may breach data privacy rights.

FRC Scoring

Scientific Merit Score (80%):

Criteria	Description	Scoring	Comments
Significance and Innovation	Importance of the research question or creative work; potential impact to move the research forward and global Impact of		

	Outcomes. Novelty of the idea, approach, or creative vision.		
Methodology	Is the approach adequate to accomplish the proposed study? Is it grounded in the appropriate scholarly literature? Are the methodologies, strategies and analyses clearly described and explained?		
Feasibility	Are the resources, logistics and time frame of implementation adequate to conduct the study?		
PI's expertise	Are the PI/collaborators experienced and knowledgeable in the field? Have they demonstrated competence and expertise? Have they shown a record of accomplishments and publications that testifies for their ability to conduct the proposed research project?		
Budget	Is the budget adequate and reasonable? Is it in conformity with the URB guidelines? Is the budget itemized? Is every item justified and relevant to the needs of the project? The size of the requested budget should not by itself raise or lower the score; only its justification and appropriateness for the project are assessed.		

Scoring guide:

5 = Excellent: Outstanding strength with no or minor weaknesses.
4 = Very Good: Strong overall, with few minor weaknesses.
3 = Good: Some strengths, but also moderate weaknesses.
2 = Fair: Some strengths, but numerous or significant weaknesses.
1 = Poor: Major weaknesses; proposal is not competitive.

Fitness Score (20%):

Depends on the following metrics:

- PI's professorial rank (higher priority to junior faculty members)
- Outcomes (e.g. publications, conferences proceedings) from previous URB grants (priority for more output)
- Submission of external grants (higher priority for more external grants submissions).

Scoring guide:

Category	**Rank out of 5**	**Publications (10 points) and Grants (5 points)***
Assistant professor <= 3 years in rank (joined AUB in fall 2022-23 or after) **(max: 20/20)**	5 points	15 (full points)
Assistant professor > 3 years in rank **(max: 18/20)**	3 points	Up to 15 pts
Associate and Full professor **(max: 15/20)**	none	Up to 15 pts

* *The scale is from 0 to 15, where the full grade is given for the PI with the highest number of publications/grants and the 0 is given to the PI with the lowest number of publications/grants during the past 5 years.*

To calculate the final Fitness Score, the scores of the three metrics are added.

Final Proposal Score:

To obtain the final scoring for each proposal, the Scientific and Fitness scores are added.