



REGULATIONS ON STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES

Adopted by a decision

of the Academic Council of the Medical University "Prof. Dr Paraskev Stoyanov" – Varna on 29.03.2017 (Protocol No. 20 / 29.03.2017), supplemented by the Academic Council on 18.12.2017 (Protocol No. 30 / 18.12.2017), amended on 16.07.2018 (Protocol No. 37 / 16.07.2018 of the AC), amended on 15.09.2020 (Protocol No. 8 / 15.09.2020 of the AC), amended and supplemented on 25.08.2023 (Protocol No. 74 / 25.08.2023 of the AC), amended on 22.04.2024 (Protocol No. 4 / 22.04.2024 of the AC), amended on 16.09.2024 (Protocol No. 10 / 16.09.2024 of the AC), and amended on 16.12.2024 (Protocol No. 15 / 16.12.2024 of the AC).

CHAPTER 1

OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

Art. 1. Objectives of the *Science Fund* are:

1. To stimulate the development of research activities at the Medical University of Varna (MU-Varna).
2. To support the career progression of the academic staff, with an emphasis on doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, and young scientists.
3. (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) To form strong multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary research teams.
4. To provide competitive funding for research projects and developments with scientific value, relevance, and practical application.
5. (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) To contribute to conducting high-quality and competitive scientific research by updating and building modern scientific infrastructure and human resources.

Art. 2. Key activities related to the functioning of the *Science Fund*:

1. Defining the rules and requirements for funding research projects.
2. Organising competitions for the selection of research projects.
3. Coordinating the process of evaluating received project proposals.
4. Ranking research projects.

5. Monitoring and controlling the implementation of successful projects, in accordance with applicable regulatory acts, the “Ordinance,” and internal rules.

Art. 3. The priorities of the *Science Fund* regarding projects are:

1. SCIENTIFIC and/or PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION – the implementation of the project should lead to an increase in knowledge in the respective scientific field or to an improvement in the conditions for conducting research activities.
2. RELEVANCE – the formulated problem should be contemporary and significant from the perspective of modern science.
3. ORIGINALITY – the proposed scientific development should exhibit uniqueness.
4. INNOVATIVENESS – the research should introduce innovative approaches or findings.
5. ALIGNMENT – the project should correspond with the scientific priorities of the Medical University of Varna.
6. PUBLICITY – the project should include appropriate means to ensure the dissemination of its results.
7. EXPERIENCE – the leader and team members should demonstrate prior experience in scientific projects.
8. PUBLICATIONS – the leader and team members should have relevant publications in the respective scientific field.
9. PARTICIPANTS – the research team should involve doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, young scientists, or students.
10. FUNDING – the project should include co-financing from other sources.
11. SUSTAINABILITY – there should be long-term improvements in scientific infrastructure and/or self-financing after the project activities are completed.

CHAPTER 2

STRUCTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Art. 4. The *Science Fund* is managed by the Academic Council (AC), assisted by an Expert Commission (EC).

Art. 5.

(1) (Amended 16.07.2018) The EC is appointed by the Rector, following proposals from the councils of the main units (faculty, college, institute, department), which are submitted to the Vice-Rector for Research Activities for each competition session.

(2) To avoid conflicts of interest, members of the EC may not apply independently or as part of a project team for a project in the relevant competition session.

Art. 6. The EC consists of at least 5 members who are under an employment contract with MU-Varna, including a Chairperson. The Commission is assisted by a Secretary from the Science Department.

Art. 7. The EC:

1. Organizes, conducts, and reports on the competitions, including the final ranking of the projects.
2. Assesses the eligibility of costs incurred during project implementation based on the submitted final reports and reviews, in compliance with the restrictions specified in Art. 19, paragraph 4 of the Ordinance.
3. Ensures full and equal access for academic staff members to materials related to its work.

Art. 8.

(1) The meetings of the EC shall be held in the presence of a quorum of at least half of the registered members.

(2) Decisions shall be taken by open ballot and simple majority.

(3) Minutes shall be kept for each meeting, which shall be signed by the attending members of the EC and the secretary.

Art. 9.

(1) The Academic Council of the Medical University of Varna controls the activity of the EC.

(2) (Amended 16.07.2018) The AC approves the results of the competition for the respective year, according to a report from the Vice-Rector for Scientific Activity.

(3) The AC determines the guidelines for application and the criteria for evaluation and ranking of projects, and in case of change, they shall enter into force no later than the date of opening of the respective competition session.

(4) (Amended 16.07.2018) The AC determines the amount of the subsidy that will be spent on scientific activity and for the publication of textbooks and scientific works.

(5) The AC determines the amount of the honorarium for reviewers, upon proposal by the EC.

Art. 10. (Amended 16.12.2024)

(1) The administrative servicing of the activities under the *Science Fund* shall be carried out by the Science Department.

(2) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) Upon proposal by the Vice-Rector for Scientific Activity, the Rector may approve document templates for individual activities of the *Fund*, including but not limited to contracts, agreements, declarations, forms, etc.

CHAPTER 3

CONDUCT OF A COMPETITION SESSION

Art. 11.

(1) The competition for the selection of research projects for funding from the *Science Fund* shall be opened by an order of the Rector.

(2) The opening of the procedure for the annual competition shall be no earlier than six months of the preceding year.

(3) The competition shall be announced on the website of MU – Varna and by notification to the heads of the main units and branches by electronic means.

Art. 12. The *Science Fund* shall finance projects that comply with the scientific priorities of MU – Varna.

Art. 13. Projects that can be financed by the fund should be in the fields of: medicine; dental medicine; pharmacy; public health; health care; biotechnology and others in which student and doctoral training is carried out. Funding is also allowed for:

1. Projects for participation in international scientific programs;
2. (Amended 16.07.2018) Ongoing research projects (up to 10% of the subsidy for scientific activity);
3. Projects for co-financing of scientific forums and cultural events;
4. Infrastructure projects for conducting quality and competitive scientific research at MU – Varna;
5. Demonstration projects;
6. Specialized publications in peer-reviewed journals and journals with an impact factor;
7. The publication of scientific works.

Art. 14. (Repealed 16.09.2024)

Art. 15. Individual lecturers with a main employment contract or with an employment contract for additional work at the higher school under Art. 111 of the Labor Code, doctoral students, students, and teams from MU – Varna may participate in the competitions for project funding from the *Science Fund*.

Art. 16.

- (1) The **head of the research or creative team** shall be a lecturer from a state higher education institution who holds a PhD and possesses proven scientific competence and experience relevant to the objectives of the project.
- (2) (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) A person holding a PhD may act as the head of one large scientific or infrastructure project and one small scientific project, or of two small scientific projects, within a single competition session.

Art. 17.

- (1) (Amended 16.07.2018) The **project team** shall mandatorily include: a *Head and an Administrative and Financial Officer*.
- (2) Doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers, young scientists, and students may participate in the project team, and their involvement is considered an advantage during the evaluation and approval of the project.
- (3) Lecturers, researchers, and doctoral students from other scientific organisations and universities may be included in the research team as per paragraph (1).

Art. 18.

- (1) (Amended and supplemented 15.09.2020) The **application documents** and the procedure for their submission shall be specified in the application guidelines for the respective competition session.
- (2) (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) The complete set of application documents shall be submitted electronically. If the project is approved for funding, the original documents must also be submitted in hard copy.
- (3) The deadline for submitting documents shall be no later than one month from the date of the competition announcement.
- (4) (Repealed 15.09.2020)

Art. 19. When planning the project budget, the following conditions should be taken into account:

1. The project budget is filled in Bulgarian Leva (BGN).
2. Prices should be indicated inclusive of VAT.
3. When remunerations are foreseen, the employer's social security contributions should also be included in their amount.
4. Remunerations cannot exceed:

- **35% of the project budget with the participation of doctoral students and/or young scientists.**
 - **10% of the project budget without the participation of doctoral students and/or young scientists.**
5. When distributing remunerations, at least 30% of them are intended for doctoral students and/or young scientists if they are included in the project team.
 6. The unit prices indicated in the financial plan should be according to an attached current offer.
 7. Expenditures for activities that are not related to the project are ineligible:
 - purchase of furniture, household appliances, telephones, and other similar items;
 - purchase of work clothing and footwear;
 - for subscriptions to newspapers and non-specialised journals;
 - for payment of fees for participation in qualification courses, computer literacy, language training, etc.;
 - for additional payment for telephones and repair of premises (with the exception of infrastructure projects);
 - deductions to the state university for overhead costs exceeding 10% of the total value of the project.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION AND RANKING OF PROJECTS

Art. 20.

(1) (Amended 16.07.2018) The procedure for evaluating the submitted project proposals begins with a check for administrative compliance by a technical commission, appointed by an order of the Rector upon proposal by the Vice-Rector for Scientific Activity. The commission provides an assessment based on the following criteria:

1. Presence of administrative and scientific description of the project proposal.
2. Presence of all appendices specified in the *Guidelines for Application*.
3. Compliance of the project proposal with the requirements specified in the *Guidelines for Application*.

(2) The technical commission under paragraph 1 prepares a report with its findings, which is presented to the EC.

Art. 21. Within two weeks after the deadline for submitting documents, a first meeting of the EC is held, at which:

It appoints a rapporteur for each project from its composition.

(Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) It makes decisions regarding the eligibility of candidates in the specific competition session. It does not allow candidates with established violations in the implementation of previous and/or current projects financed by the "Science" Fund in the last three years to proceed to review (based on its own decision, documented in meeting minutes).

It familiarizes itself with the findings of the Technical Commission and makes subsequent decisions.

Чл. 21. Within two weeks after the deadline for submitting application documents, the first meeting of the Expert Commission (EC) shall be held, during which:

1. A rapporteur for each project shall be appointed from among the members of the Commission.
2. (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) The EC shall make decisions regarding the eligibility of candidates for the respective competition session. Candidates with confirmed violations in the implementation of previous and/or current projects funded by the *Science Fund* within the past three years shall not be allowed to proceed to review (based on a decision of the Commission, as recorded in the meeting minutes).
3. The EC shall review the findings of the Technical Commission and make subsequent decisions.

Art. 22.

(1) The rapporteur must familiarise themselves with the project proposal and select two reviewers, obtaining their consent.

(2) At least one of the reviewers is required not to have a contract with MU – Varna.

(3) Members of the EC, as well as related persons who are in administrative subordination or kinship with members of the project team, cannot be selected as reviewers.

Art. 23. (Amended 16.07.2018) Within two weeks after the first meeting of the EC, a subsequent meeting is held at which the proposed reviewers are presented and approved. EC members are not permitted to disclose the names of the reviewers.

Art. 24. The rapporteur must provide detailed contact information for each of the approved reviewers (full name, institution, position, mobile or office telephone, and email) to the Science Department within one week after the meeting.

Art. 25. (Repealed 16.12.2024)

(1) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) The Science Department shall send/provide the materials for review – the project proposal, its appendices, and the review form – to the approved reviewers.

(2) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) For approved reviewers who do not have a contract with MU-Varna, the Science Department shall send/provide the materials based on a concluded contract.

(3) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) When a template contract with a reviewer under paragraph 2 has been approved by the Rector, it shall be concluded according to the template. If the template is inapplicable to a specific case, the contract shall be agreed with a lawyer.

Art. 26.

(1) The original documents, completed and signed, shall be sent by courier/submitted to the Science Department no later than 10 days from receipt of the materials for review.

(2) (Repealed 15.09.2020)

(3) In case of incorrect or incomplete content of the submitted documents, payment of the honorarium may be after the deadline stated in the contract.

Art. 27.

(1) The Science Department shall provide the received reviews to the respective rapporteur electronically.

(2) The rapporteur shall prepare a statement containing a summary of the reviewers' evaluations and expressing their own position within one week of receiving the review forms.

(3) The statements shall be sent electronically to the Science Department.

Art. 28.

(1) At a meeting of the EC, the collected reports shall be discussed, and if necessary, arbitrators shall be appointed, in case of a difference exceeding 30% between the two project evaluations or in case the project is rejected by one of the reviewers.

(2) In case of a difference in the evaluations of the two reviewers exceeding 50%, the Expert Commission shall take a decision on the subsequent procedure regarding the ranking.

(3) In the final ranking, it is within the powers of the EC to index the evaluation of projects by up to 5% in case of compliance with the strategy and priorities of MU – Varna.

(4) (Amended 15.09.2020) The ranking shall be performed based on the evaluations given for each project proposal.

(5) (Amended 16.07.2018) The decisions of the EC are final and shall be reported to the Academic Council by the Vice-Rector for Scientific Activity.

(6) (Amended 16.07.2018) Within one week from the announcement of the competition results, project leaders have the right to access the reviews in the Science Department, while preserving the anonymity of the reviewers.

Art. 28a (New, effective from 25.08.2023) An increase in project costs by up to 10% is permissible following a decision of the Academic Council for each competition session.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Art. 29. (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024)

(1) Contracts with the project leaders whose proposals have been selected for funding shall be concluded within 10 days of the decision of the Expert Commission regarding the final ranking. The content of these contracts shall comply with the regulatory requirements set out in the Ordinance.

(2) (New, effective from 16.09.2024) The contracts shall have a duration of between one and three years.

(3) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) Where a standard contract template for project leaders has been approved by the Rector, the contract shall be concluded using the template. If the template is not applicable to a specific case, the contract shall be coordinated with a legal advisor.

Art. 30.

(1) (Amended and supplemented 16.09.2024) For contracts with a duration exceeding one year, a **supplementary agreement** for the following year shall be concluded, subject to a favourable opinion from the council of the main unit. The agreement shall include an updated financial plan for the allocation of funds.

(2) (New, effective from 16.09.2024) For contracts with a duration of less than three years, a **supplementary agreement** for extending the contract period may be concluded, subject to a favourable opinion from the council of the main unit. The total duration may not exceed the three-year limit set in the Ordinance from the date of contract signature, and the agreement shall include an updated financial plan for the allocation of funds.

(3) (New, effective from 16.09.2024) In cases where the procurement and delivery of equipment, consumables, and reagents are carried out under the Public Procurement Act and cause delays in the implementation of the activities outlined in the project schedule, the

duration of the contract shall be suspended. The project leader is required to notify the Vice-Rector for Research in writing and in a timely manner.

(4) (Amended 16.07.2018) Apart from the cases under the previous paragraph, and provided that the main aim of the project is not affected, changes in the budget are permissible. These may include reallocations within the same budget category or changes to the agreed amounts between budget categories, provided they do not hinder the achievement of the planned results. In such cases, the project leader must inform the Vice-Rector for Research in writing and in a timely manner.

(5) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) The supplementary agreements under paragraph 2 shall be concluded using the standard template approved by the Rector. If the template is not applicable to a specific case, the agreement shall be coordinated with a legal advisor.

Art. 31.

(1) (Amended and supplemented 25.08.2023) The implementation of the projects begins with a report submitted by the project leader, accompanied by a Financial Plan and a Technical Specification (where applicable), within two weeks of signing the contract or supplementary agreement.

(2) (Supplemented 25.08.2023) The procurement of equipment, consumables, materials, external services, and other items specified in the project shall be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Public Procurement Act and the Internal Rules for Preliminary Control of the Lawfulness of Financial Activities and the Implementation of the Dual-Signature System at the Medical University of Varna. In some cases, this may necessitate the adjustment of the technical specifications.

(3) (Amended 16.07.2018) In cases where the expenditures outlined in the Financial Plan are exceeded due to reasons directly linked to the current Public Procurement Act, the project leader must notify the Vice-Rector for Research in writing prior to the signing of the public procurement contract between the Medical University of Varna and the contractor selected for implementation. The Vice-Rector for Research shall convene the Expert Commission to make a subsequent decision, which must be approved by the Academic Council. If additional funding is granted, a supplementary agreement shall be signed with the project leader.

Art. 32.

(1) The reporting of project activities and expenses shall be carried out in accordance with the System of Indicators for Evaluation, Monitoring and Reporting of Results, approved by the Rector of MU – Varna, through interim and final reports, which must be submitted to the Science Department.

(2) The interim reports shall be as follows:

1. Six-month report – compulsory for the first six months, to be submitted by 7 July of the current calendar year.
2. Annual report – for projects with a duration of more than one year, to be submitted no later than 10 December of the current calendar year.

(3) A final report must be prepared by the project leader within 30 days of the project's completion.

(4) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) If any of the interim reports are not submitted within one month of the specified deadline, the project leader and the members of the research team shall not be eligible to participate in research teams submitting new project proposals under the fund's calls until the report is submitted.

(5) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) If the final report is not submitted within three months of the specified deadline, the project leader and the members of the research team shall not be eligible to participate in research teams submitting new project proposals under the fund's calls for a period of three years.

(6) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) In the event of refusal to submit an interim or final report within one month of the deadlines outlined in paragraphs 4 and 5, the project leader and the members of the research team shall be liable to pay a penalty equal to the amount of funds spent under the project. If no funds have been spent, the penalty shall amount to 20% of the total project value.

(7) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) In the cases described in paragraph 6, the Science Department shall prepare a report on the funds spent, which will serve as the basis for determining the penalty amount.

Art. 33.

(1) Upon completion of each project and submission of the final report, a final reviewer shall be appointed.

(2) The final reviewer shall be an academic holding a habilitated position, external to the unit, and proposed by the Expert Commission (EC).

(3) The review is remunerated within the budget allocated for the implementation of the contract.

Art. 34.

The reviewer shall submit the final review to the Science Department within 30 days of the date of signing their review contract.

Art. 35.

The interim and final reports shall be prepared in accordance with the System of Indicators for Evaluation, Monitoring and Reporting of Results, approved by the Rector of the Medical University of Varna.

Art. 36.

(1) The final reports and reviews shall be examined by the members of the Expert Commission, after which an assessment is made at a meeting regarding the compliance of the activities with the initially set goals and objectives, as well as the eligibility of the expenditures incurred during the implementation of the projects.

(2) The remuneration for the project team members, as outlined in the Financial Plan, shall be paid within three months of the acceptance of the final report by the Expert Commission.

CHAPTER 6

OBLIGATIONS OF THE PROJECT MANAGER

Art. 37.

(1) The project manager organises and directs the activities for the execution of the contract, in accordance with its clauses, the requirements of the Ordinance and the present Regulations.

(2) A decision to terminate the term for the execution of the project, in the presence of objective reasons, is taken at a meeting of the Academic Council after a proposal by the EC (Evaluation Committee, likely). In case the contract is terminated due to the fault of the Contractor, the latter owes the Contracting Authority a penalty, according to the clauses of the contract.

(3) The Academic Council of MU – Varna redistributes the funds in case of non-fulfillment of the commitments under the contracts among the remaining research teams fulfilling the obligations under the contracts.

(4) After concluding the contract, the project manager is obliged to submit an application to the Ethics Committee for Scientific Research (for research work with people) or respectively to the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency at the Ministry of Agriculture (for research work with animals). In the absence of objective reasons for not submitting the application within a period of 1 year from the conclusion of the contract, the project activity shall be terminated, and the manager is obliged to reimburse the expended funds as of the date of termination of the activity.

(5) (New, effective from 16.12.2024) For non-fulfillment of commitments under the contract by the project manager outside the cases of Art. 32, paragraph 4, 5 and 6, the teams shall pay

a penalty in an amount determined by the EC and in accordance with the unfulfilled commitments under the concluded contract.

Art. 38.

- (1) The manager, together with the members of the project team, should ensure the achievement of the set indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the success of the scientific research (quantitative and qualitative), expected in the short and long term.
- (2) In case of objective reasons preventing the execution of the project, the manager should promptly notify the Science Department.

CHAPTER 7

CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR THE EVALUATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING OF RESULTS

Art. 39.

(1) The Medical University of Varna assesses the outcomes of scientific and infrastructure projects based on a System of Indicators for Evaluation, Monitoring and Reporting, which meet the following criteria:

1. Alignment with university, regional, national and European research priorities;
2. Measurability;
3. Clarity of formulation;
4. Rationality of measurement.

Art. 40.

The results of scientific and infrastructure projects funded by the *Science Fund* are accepted by the Expert Committee (EC), in accordance with the System of Indicators for Evaluation, Monitoring and Reporting of Results, as approved by the Rector of the Medical University of Varna.

CHAPTER 8

RIGHTS OVER THE PRODUCTS

Art. 41.

(1) The product(s) created in the course of implementing projects funded by the *Science Fund*, if they meet the criteria for an invention or utility model under applicable legislation, shall

belong solely and exclusively to the Medical University of Varna and shall be registered by the University.

(2) The project leader and the team members are not entitled to provide any results or developments related to the project to third parties without the prior written consent of the Medical University of Varna. All results and any created intellectual property are the property of the University.

(3) The product(s) developed under projects funded by the *Science Fund* shall be considered official inventions within the meaning of Article 15 of the Patent and Utility Model Registration Act (PUMRA).

(4) Inventors are entitled to fair remuneration. When determining the amount of remuneration, the rules and procedures in force at the Medical University of Varna shall be taken into account, as well as each party's contribution, including financial investments made in the invention, the equipment and materials provided, knowledge, expertise, personnel, labour, and other forms of support.

CHAPTER 9

TRANSITIONAL AND FINAL PROVISIONS

§1. These regulations were adopted by decision of the Academic Council of the Medical University of Varna on 29 March 2017 (Protocol No. 20/29.03.2017) and shall become effective on the date of their adoption.

§2. These regulations govern the activities and procedures of competitive sessions under the *Science Fund* announced after the date of their adoption.

§3. Any matters not regulated by these provisions shall be resolved by the Expert Committee (EC) in compliance with the Higher Education Act, the Regulation, and the internal rules in force at the University.

§4. Throughout these Regulations, "the Regulation" shall refer to the REGULATION ON THE CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ASSESSMENT, PLANNING, ALLOCATION, AND EXPENDITURE OF STATE BUDGET FUNDS FOR THE FINANCING OF SCIENTIFIC OR ARTISTIC ACTIVITY IN STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, adopted by Council of Ministers Decree No. 233 of 10 September 2016 (promulgated in State Gazette No. 73 of 16 September 2016).