20. PAK-UK Researchers Link Program (RLP)

Overview

HEC in collaboration with British Council initiated a new “Researchers Links Program” to strengthen existing cooperation between the two organizations in the field of Higher Education and Research. For this purpose, a formal letter of intent was signed between HEC and the British Council on June 5, 2014.

Researcher Links initiative utilizes the common ground of shared research interests to provide a forum for early career researchers from the UK and internationally interact, learn from each other and explore opportunities for building long-lasting research collaborations. The initiative comprises thematic workshops and travel grants, and will be co-funded by British Council and HEC. Through this program, we will be able to assure maximum potential for Pak-UK benefit and longer term sustainability.

Program Objectives

- To improve the quality of research, with citation rates increasing international co-authorship, and higher productivity levels of internationally mobile researchers
- To continue and connect internationally, and build mutually beneficial partnerships for the future with emerging powers.
- To facilitate research collaborations with UK for growing scientific capacity.
- This initiative will also target acknowledged gaps in funding to encourage outward and inward mobility to enable early career researchers to make initial contacts internationally.
- To provide platform to early career researchers to work with established researchers with international reputation, who will mentor and provide guidance and access to their scholarly networks.
- To ensure that all funded proposals are of a high quality by the stewardship of established researchers and the involvement of UK and partner country national research bodies in the peer review process.
- To engage higher education institutions and encourage the ‘people to people’ interactions that form the most successful research collaborations.
- To work in partnership with national research funders, and facilitate policy-level discussions where appropriate on how to ensure sustainable future research collaborations.
- To encourage the involvement of social sciences and humanities researchers, and provide space for interdisciplinary interaction, with opportunities to bring together researchers from different fields focused on a common theme.
Proposed Activity Plan and Criteria

Workshops

This is an open call for experienced researchers from the UK and Pakistan to lead a workshop in an area which responds to this potential. Proposals are reviewed by UK and partner organizations, and selected on the basis of quality of the leading researchers, fit to priority areas, and potential for longer term sustainability. The workshop will be organized and delivered through British Council and HEC. Guidelines will be produced for running a workshop, and they will include the following requirements:

- Residential workshop, over 3-4 days.
- Approx. 40 participants. Equal number from the UK and Pakistan
- All research disciplines can be covered, and interdisciplinary themes, and those including social sciences and humanities will be encouraged
- Leading researchers from the UK and Pakistan will be involved as ‘workshop leaders’ in defining theme, inviting keynotes, and selecting workshop participants
- Equal number of participants from the UK and Pakistan – majority being early-stage researchers (postdoctoral level), but also with more experienced researchers to act as mentors
- There will be an open call for participants to the workshops, with clear selection criteria and process

Travel Grants

There will be an open call for travel grants for mobility between the UK and Pakistan. The details of this will be refined during the project development, but key points are:

- Open to all researchers, in UK and Pakistan including those who have participated in thematic workshops
- Support short research visits (up to 3 months) with the aim of starting up a longer term collaboration
- Either inward or outward mobility, or combination of both
- One call per year

Activity Roadmap

- British Council announced the Call for proposal for workshop
- Scrutiny of Received Proposals
- Evaluation of shortlisted proposals
- Meeting with HEC for finalization of Approved workshop proposal
- Issuance of Award Letter
- Release of Funds
- Activity Completion Report

Budget

As per agreement British Council and HEC will contribute £100,000 each. Total sum of contribution will be £600,000 over three years.