

Policy on the management of funded R&D projects

This document is an unofficial translation of the USI “Direttiva sui progetti di ricerca e sviluppo finanziati” for information only. Only the Italian version has legal value.

Revision based on Rectorate’s decision of 24.02.2022

1. Definitions and general principles

Art. 1 Purpose

This Policy defines the rules for the management of "funded R&D projects" acquired by USI. In particular:

- it defines the rules in order to cover the general costs borne by USI and for the management of any overhead included in the financing of the projects;
- it regulates the duties within USI and, in particular, the sharing of tasks between the principal investigator and the administrative services, both in the submission phase of the project proposal and for the grant management if it gets financed.

The masculine terms are valid for both genders.

Art. 2. Definitions

USI employee: for the purposes of this Policy, staff with an employment contract with USI.

Funded project: a research and/or service activity entirely or largely funded by financial means from outside and allocated to USI (see Article 3).

Principal investigator: the USI employee who is in lead of the project and assumes responsibility for the contents of the project towards the external partners (e.g. the main applicant of an SNSF project), possibly representing a USI organizational unit.

Project proposal: the document sent to an external entity to request financial support for a funded project.

Funding body: the external entity that provides the funding for the project with its own funds (public financing agency, public body, foundation, private company).

SRIT: Research and Transfer Service.

SC: Controlling Service.

SG: Legal Service.

Art. 3 Scope

This Policy applies to the following types of funded projects:

- Funding from national and international agencies (SNSF, EU, Innosuisse, other research programs), usually awarded through competitive calls for proposals according to rules defined by the funding body.

- R&D contracts with public entities or private companies.
- R&D consulting of USI employees within their employment relationship with USI.
- Contributions from foundations and donations earmarked for specific research activities.

Excluded from the scope of this Policy are:

- Structural funding that provides regular support to entire organizational units.
- Sponsoring and donations for the University (without specified purposes)
- Royalties from licensing agreements and intellectual property agreements.

2. Submission of the proposal

Art. 4 Submission of the proposal

The submission of the project proposal shall take place through the principal investigator in accordance with the requirements defined by the funding body.

USI policies and regulations apply to all aspects not defined by the funding body. The responsibility for the scientific content of the proposal lies with the principal investigator, the contracts are always in name of USI.

As a general rule, USI employees are entitled to submit project proposals if their permanence at USI is guaranteed for the entire duration of the project and allows an adequate and effective management of the project. In particular:

- Professors and assistants in tenure-track;
- Maître d'enseignement et de recherche;
- Group leaders.

The Rectorate has the right to allow exceptions.

Art. 5 Duty of information

The principal investigator shall inform the SRIT prior to submission and send the relevant documents to the SRIT if they are not already available online.

He shall also inform the SRIT of the progress of the procedure and, where appropriate, of the decision (positive or negative) of the funding body.

Information on the submission of project proposals shall be treated as confidential.

Art. 6 Project budget

The budget is prepared by the principal investigator in together with the SRIT, which verifies in particular:

- Compliance with USI policies with regard to the employment of staff.
- The use of rates for the staff employed and the coverage of the costs.
- An adequate contribution to the general research costs incurred by USI (see Article 19).
- Any infrastructure requirements and other additional costs to be borne by USI.
- A possible surcharge for the exclusivity of intellectual property (see Article 8).

For this purpose, SRIT can ask support of USI's administrative services and in particular SC, human resources and legal services.

Art. 7. How to calculate the project costs

The following two methods of calculation shall apply:

- At *actual cost*, i.e. on the basis of actual foreseen costs. These may include:
 - Actual personnel costs (including social security charges).
 - Research costs (equipment, materials, travel, data collection, publications, etc.).
 - The travel costs linked to the project.

They exclude the general infrastructure costs and, in the case of the SNSF, the time spent by the principal investigator.

The quotation may include a contribution to cover the general costs borne by USI (see art. 19).

The *actual cost* method applies when explicitly required for in the rules of the funding body (in particular SNSF, EU and Innosuisse) and, as a rule, for contracts providing for the durable employment of staff (e.g. a doctoral candidate for three years) and a financial reporting.

- At *full cost*, i.e. based on a calculation of personnel costs which includes the employer's social security contributions, general costs borne by USI and which considers a profit margin, too. The implementing provision defines the hourly rates applicable to the different categories of staff.

The *full cost* method is mainly applied for consultancy and service contracts that do not require an actual reporting of costs, but foresee a payment on the basis of the services provided, as well as when explicitly requested by the financing body.

Art. 8 Intellectual property

If the research contract implies the assignment or exclusive use of the intellectual property rights generated in the framework of the funded project, USI shall apply a supplement to the contractual costs.

The relevant amount is negotiated by SRIT with the financing body and approved by the Administrative Direction.

3. Organizational aspects and liabilities

Art. 9 Liability

The contractual liability for the funded projects lies with USI.

The principal investigator shall be responsible for the scientific and the management of the funded project, in particular for:

- organization and conduct of the research activity;
- management of the collaborators employed on the project;
- generation of the results and delivery to the contractor;
- decision on research expenses within the project budget and in compliance with USI rules;
- communication with the funding body on the scientific and organizational aspects.
- Keep informed USI's administrative services with regard to the payments modalities.

In case of disputes, the USI Academic Staff Regulations shall apply.

Art. 10. Drafting of the contract

The SRIT, together with the principal investigator, will draw up the contract where applicable, based on standard models by types of funded project provided by the funding body, or, in their absence, approved by the Rectorate.

Signature rights shall be governed by the Regulations on power of attorney ("Regolamento per le deleghe") and the relevant implementing provisions ("Direttiva di applicazione").

Art. 11 Duty of communication

The principal investigator shall inform the SRIT of any situation that could jeopardize the proper implementation of the project and in particular:

- Substantial delays in the execution of the contract.
- Conflicts with the funding body over the results.
- Conflicts and issues related to employees.
- Significant deviation in budget and potential overspending.
- Situations that require a change of the principal investigator.

SRIT seeks a solution in agreement with the principal investigator and the responsible services at USI.

In the case of particularly serious situations that cannot be directly solved, SRIT shall inform USI's Research Pro-Rector and the Administrative Direction, in particular in cases where the project could compromise USI's interests and image or in the case of personal conflicts.

Art. 12. Scientific rules of conduct

The principal investigator undertakes to respect the good rules of scientific practice and ensures that the project employees carry out their tasks in a professional manner. In particular for:

- The ethical rules of scientific conduct.
- The independence of the research from personal interests and the funding body.
- Respect for employees' rights to research results.
- Compliance with USI rules.

In the case of serious violations of the code of conduct in the field of scientific integrity, the principal investigator is required to inform the Research Pro-Rector who will instruct any internal procedures aimed at solving the issue.

Art 13. Contribution of the principal investigator

The principal investigator devotes adequate time to the project management and supervision of the employees. As a rule, this time is considered included in the employment contract, as the acquisition and management of projects is part of the academic body's tasks.

If part of the salary can be charged to the project, an equivalent amount is made available to the PI's personal account ("fondo personale"), provided other contractual provisions are fulfilled.

Exceptions are possible in the case of:

- Part-time employees whose contract does not include a research component. In such case, the Administrative Direction can grant an increase in the employment percentage.
- Collaborators who acquire grants of a significantly higher volume than the norm in their field or particularly large and challenging projects (ERC, SNSF Sinergia). In such cases, the Administrative Direction may make available additional staff or infrastructure resources than foreseen by the normal allocation.
- Consultancy contracts requiring a direct contribution from the responsible person. In such cases, part of the project's funds can be paid as a salary supplement, provided this does not exceed in total – including other supplements to the main salary (e.g. payment of extra ECTS) – 20% of the main salary. Authorization from the Administrative Direction is required.
- Additionally, the grantees of Innosuisse or European projects (excluding ERC projects) whose allocated USI funding volume exceeds CHF 400,000.-, will receive a tuition relief of 6 ECTS total, funded by the general USI budget. The annual distribution shall be agreed upon with the Dean and/or the Pro-Rector for Education and Students' Experience. In justified cases, the incentive can be converted into the corresponding monetary amount in favor of the grantee's personal account.

In this case, the Administrative Direction may grant the principal investigator the following:

- The coverage of part of the salary on the project (Innosuisse, research contracts) and/or an increase in the level of employment.
- The allocation of additional resources.
- A reduction in the employment duties, for example in the teaching load.
- For consultancy contracts, a salary increase which shall not exceed 25% of the gross salary.

These amendments require approval in writing.

Art. 14 Durable goods

Insofar as the research contract does not provide otherwise, the durable goods acquired within the framework of a funded project, namely equipment, computers and hardware components, databases and other research infrastructures, are the property of USI, and can in principle be used by all USI employees.

Priority is given to the needs of the funded project and for the research needs of the principal investigator.

The Rectorate will arbitrate on any conflicts of use.

Art. 15 Termination of the principal investigator's USI employment contract

In the event of termination of the contractual relationship with USI, the principal investigator commits to take the necessary measures to ensure the conclusion of ongoing funded projects:

- The performance of the planned activities and the delivery of the results to the funding body.
- The management of employees and respect of their rights.
- Proper supervision of the PhD students until the dissertation is completed.
- Respect of the rights of USI and its collaborators with regard to research results.
- The transfer to USI of all durable goods acquired during the contract.

The responsible employee negotiates with the Rectorate the modalities of conclusion and in particular:

- The possible transfer of the contract and funds to another institution (where provided for by the funding body).
- A possible partial continuation of the employment relationship with USI in order to ensure the conclusion of the project.
- The possible transfer of responsibility to another USI's employee.

Agreements in this respect require the written form.

4. Financial management

Art. 16 General principles

The financial management of funded projects is carried out separately from the other economic activities of USI and of the principal investigator so that costs and revenues relating to the project are clearly separated.

Exceptions are possible in justified cases, in particular research contracts paid based on performance and for which a financial report is not required can be managed directly through the employees' research funds.

The USI policy on finance and controlling applies.

Art. 17 Financial management mode

The financial management of the funded projects is ensured by the Research and Transfer Service (SRIT) and the Controlling Service (SC).

They shall be responsible in particular for the following activities:

- Creation and management of the cost center of the financed project;
- Management of the accounting records and controlling of the project with respect to the financing conditions and the available budget.
- Billing and collection of funds.

- Periodic financial reporting (according to the rules laid down in the contract/decision).

Art. 18 USI services

USI provides the following services to carry out the funded projects:

- basic space and infrastructure for carrying out the research;
- time devoted by the principal investigator to carrying out the research, insofar as this is compatible with his contractual tasks.

Performances by USI that exceed the basic budget must be approved by the Administrative Direction at the time of submission of the proposal. This applies in particular to:

- Infrastructure needs exceeding the basic equipment (e.g. IT tools).
- Research costs not covered by the project (e.g. travel).
- Applications for USI's financial contribution to the project required by the financing body (Interreg, Swissuniversities projects).

Art. 19. Overheads

The general costs to be borne by USI are covered as follows:

- For research projects (SNSF, EU, Innosuisse) through an overhead paid by the funding body in addition to the actual research costs.
- For public and private research contracts in the form of an overhead included in the project budget (actual cost calculation) or in the hourly rates used (full cost calculation) and taken from project revenues.
- By USI for projects involving co-financing by the university (Swissuniversities projects, SNSF National Centers of Competence in Research NCCRs).

The attached table specifies the amount of overhead by project type and its destination.

Table 1. Overhead

Type of project	Overhead	Breakdown
Swiss National Science Foundation	10-15% of the value of the project depending on the SNSF decisions.	1/6 in favour of the research fund of the responsible employee.
	Paid separately to USI each year.	1/6 in favour of the Strategic Research Fund. 2/3 in favour of USI.
Innosuisse	As a rule 15% of the value of the project, paid together with the project funds.	1/3 to the research fund of the responsible employee. 2/3 in favour of USI.
European Union framework programmes	As a rule 25% of the value of the project, paid together with the project funds.	
Research and service contracts of public bodies	25% of actual costs, added at the time of the offer.	1/3 in favor of the research fund of the responsible employee 2/3 in favor of USI
Research and service contracts of private companies	25% of actual costs, added at the time of the offer.	1/3 in favor of the research fund of the responsible employee 2/3 in favor of USI
Research and Service Contracts	Included in the hourly staff costs.	25% of the value of the project is taken by USI as a contribution to overhead costs.
Contributions for research from foundations and donations	10% of effective costs	Entirely in favour of USI

Art. 20. Financial closure

At the end of the project SRIT and SC proceed to the preparation of a final report (where required) and closure operations.

Any economic surplus goes to the principal investigator's research fund, to the extent that it does not have to be returned to the funding body and USI's general costs have been covered.

Any financial losses shall be borne by the research fund of the principal investigator.

5. Transitional arrangements

Art. 21. Entry into force

This Directive shall apply from 1 January 2020 to all ongoing funded projects and new proposals submitted.

Any other internal provisions on this matter shall be repealed.

Art. 22 Execution

The Rectorate shall lay down detailed rules for the implementation of this Policy in an implementing provision.