SCHEME FOR PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH COLLABORATION (SPARC)*

The Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) launched by MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India) aims at improving the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational Institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world from 28 selected nations to jointly solve problems of national and/or international relevance (see SPARC eBrochure: https://sparc.iitkgp.ac.in/assets/pdf/SPARC_eBrochure.pdf).

Nature of Proposal

A joint research project has to be submitted by an Indian Institution / University with participation of a Foreign University/Institute under SPARC for a two-year interaction programme

The basic features of the proposal are as follows:

The proposal will address a topic in any of the Thrust Areas of SPARC and address a challenging issue of theoretical, experimental and/or translational value.

The project team should contain at least two international Faculty members, two Indian Faculty members and two Researchers pursuing PhD or post-doc level from each side. The Faculty members may be from one or two eligible institutions in each side. The students have to be registered full-time students or post-docs in their respective institutions. From the foreign side, it is expected that the team will be from the same country. Each side will have a Lead Institution (LI) and a Principal and co-Principal Investigator.

The proposal must state clear and measurable deliverables with timelines.

The Budget section should contain Component of MHRD funding (under SPARC), Indian Institution's Funding, Foreign Institution's Funding and the clear Deliverables.

Essential components of the proposal:

Two visits by the Foreign Faculty to Indian Institutes totalling a combined 2 to 8 months over two years. A visit can be of duration of 15 days to 4 months. During a visit, in addition to carrying out the project related collaboration and research the Foreign Faculty will teach one course on the topic of the proposal for 12 to 36 hours depending on the period of stay.

A set of tangible earmarked deliverables of the collaborative efforts on the proposed topic consisting of joint research outcomes including but not limited to two or more of the following:-

Top journal publications
Text books
Research monographs
Patents
Products
Scaled pilots / demonstrations
Course materials

Optional components of the proposal:

Support to Indian research students for long term visits of up to a year to the partner Institution of the foreign collaborator for carrying out experiments and getting trained in an advanced laboratory facility not easily available in India.

Holding at most two Workshops in India on the topic of the proposal to bring together a larger community of researchers for strengthening the collaborative research component. These may be part of premier international conferences held in India as workshops or special sessions.

Support of foreign students to spend time in the Indian Institutes as part-time visiting foreign students.

Funding and Budget

The proposal will be for a period of two years.

The budget can be in any one of the three baskets

- Upto ₹ 50 lakhs
- From ₹ 50 lakhs upto ₹ 75 lakhs
- From ₹ 75 lakhs upto ₹ 100 lakhs

Proposals which have longer time visits of foreign faculty will be given priority for larger sized baskets.

What is covered under funding?

Support for international faculty to cover travel, stay, honorarium, etc.
Travel and stipend of post-doctoral/doctoral scholars
International travel of Indian scholars
Budget for workshop
Contingency for accessories, consumables, chemicals, video recording, field work, documentation, local travel in India, contingencies, institutional costs, miscellaneous, etc.

Funding details

For a visit of foreign faculty ranging from 1 to 4-month, payment will be made up to US$ 15,000/- for the first month and US$ 10,000/- thereafter including honorarium, travel, stay, etc. Usually, the honorarium of foreign faculty is approx $333 per day.

For a visit of foreign faculty of 15 days and less than a month, payment will be made upto US$ 12,000/- including honorarium, travel, stay, etc.

For the visit of a foreign post-doctoral/doctoral scholar, the host Institute will provide suitable free accommodation and an out-of-pocket allowance of ₹ 12,000 per month subject to an upper limit of ₹ 2 lakhs over the duration of the project. The student has to stay for a minimum period of 3 months and register as a visiting foreign student. Tuition fees will be waived by the Indian Institution. Usually, the out-of-pocket allowance for a foreign student is Rs 400 per day.

For the visit of an Indian student to the Foreign Institution, payment will be made upto US$ 2000 for travel and $1000 per month for out-of-pocket allowances. Usually, the out-of-pocket allowance for an Indian student is approx $33 per day.

Upto ₹ 3 lakhs will be approved for Workshop subject to a maximum of two workshops.

An overheads and contingency expense of upto 20% of the sum cost of other items mentioned above or ₹ 15 lakhs (whichever is minimum) for accessories, consumables, chemicals, video recording, field work, documentation, local travel in India, contingencies, institutional costs, miscellaneous, etc.

What is NOT covered under funding?

Any major equipment

It is expected that the equipment already exists in the research groups or will be procured through funding for complimentary ongoing projects.

Scholarship / stipend of Indian scholars

they will continue to receive their regular mode of remuneration (as applicable) from their respective institutions.

Travel of International student/post-doctoral scholar

Other sources of funding

The Institutions will list out the support provided to the project in terms of faculty, researchers, infrastructure, waivers, stipends, explicit costs to various components that are met by the Institute and the source from where the same is being met

Funding from external funding agencies for complementary ongoing projects

However, each proposal will clearly state that this proposal does not duplicate any other similar proposal funded by the Government of India which funds the same aspects of SPARC including but not limited to those partially or fully funded by MHRD, DST, DBT and other Ministries of the Government of India.

Complementary ongoing projects will be separately indicated.

Additional support from the International partner may also be listed in quantitative terms

IPR Rights

The IPR developed out of the project will be decided as per norms of the participating Institutes. The Indian Institute should get the benefits out of Patents / Royalty, rather than the foreign institute or the individual faculty. All disputes must have Indian jurisdiction and applicable laws of India (for any act taking place in India) to be clearly defined by the parties. Any special deviation must be resolved by MHRD through the SPARC Liaison Cell and approved by the Apex Committee.

Evaluation process

Each Indian Institution will be allowed to submit at most 25 projects as the lead Institution from India and not more than 10 with any foreign country. All participating Indian Institutions will develop a mechanism to review

and shortlist proposals before submission for SPARC. Each Indian-Foreign team can submit at most one proposal with the same Principal Investigator pairs.

Proposal Evaluation

A Sectional Committee (SC) with a Sectional Chair from each Thrust Area will be selected by the Apex Committee. Each Sectional Chair will get each proposal reviewed by one or two experts. Based on the reviews, the Sectional Chair will make a recommendation for shortlisting. The National Coordinating Institute and Sectional Chairs will jointly review the shortlisted projects, make a final recommendation for the consideration of the Apex Committee.

A proposal will be primarily evaluated on the following criteria:

Quality / relevance of the area proposed.
Potential to significantly advance knowledge and / or create impact on society.
Joint strength of the teams.
Proposed outcome & deliverables.
Available and complementary experimental infrastructure in the institutions (for such kinds of projects).
Additional financial support from other sources.
This additional support including commitment from international partner will be an important criterion for evaluation of interest from the submitting team for ensuring success of the project.

Project Evaluation

All projects will be monitored and reviewed once mid-way and once at the end of the project to evaluate progress and final outcome.

Two Annual SPARC Conferences will be held, one at the end of each year to disseminate and highlight the outcomes of the SPARC Scheme. This will embed Indo-X Meetings between participating countries and Thematic Workshop presentations in each of the areas.

Important dates

31st October Closing of proposal

Useful links

SPARC website (https://sparc.iitkgp.ac.in)

SPARC eBrochure https://sparc.iitkgp.ac.in/assets/pdf/SPARC_eBrochure.pdf

SPARC Proposal Management System (https://sparc.iitkgp.ac.in/sparcpms/auth/login.htm)

* From SPARC website.

Process for Proposal Submission:

The proposal submission should be through SPARC Proposal Management System (PMS) (https://sparc.iitkgp.ac.in/sparcpms/auth/login.htm):

The PMS will facilitate the Institute coordinators to invite principal investigator (PI) from their Institute to submit a proposal.

- Prospective Principal Investigator should send his/her name and email ID to SPOC.SPARC.DAVV@gmail.com so that they can be added to the PMS. Once this is done, the PI will get an invitation email from SPARC (support@sparc.iitkgp.ac.in).
- PIs can then have an access to the functionalities of PMS and can submit the proposal.
- The proposal form contains multiple sections which should be filled up before final submission. These are described in the User's Manual for SPARC PMS. The PI can view the draft proposal at any time. After final submission, changes are not allowed and PI can download the final version of the proposal in PDF format
- During the final submission, the system will send an email to the foreign PI for giving his/her consent online. The PMS will also facilitate the PI to resend the email. The foreign PI should click on the link mentioned in the email or open it in the browser. The foreign PI can download the proposal and click on the "Accept" button to give his/her consent.

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