

Policies and Guidelines for Interdisciplinary Research at DLSU¹

Rationale

Multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary² research projects typically involve people from different research backgrounds who come together bringing with them their disciplinary points of view and methodologies in addressing a specific problem. Having gained significance since the 1990s, interdisciplinary research practices afford the blending of stances that allows the researcher to view a problem with greater depth and from a broader range of perspectives. Interdisciplinary research approaches also provide ways of focusing on problems that are too complex or too extensive to be tackled by a single discipline (Davies & Devlin, 2007). The process of viewing events from a variety of disciplinary perspectives may involve what Rorty (1991) describes as “not a process of setting aside our old vocabularies, beliefs, and desires but rather of gradually adding to and modifying them by playing them off against each other ... The alternative image is that of our minds gradually growing larger and stronger and more interesting by the addition of new options – new candidates for beliefs and desire, phrased in new vocabularies” (p.14). Research in the University needs to work towards and embody this alternative image if relevance in, and progress through, research should be realized.

It is now increasingly evident that the research productivity in De La Salle University is moving closer to further improving capacities for defining and understanding societal issues and concerns. Many of the significant researches from the Research Centers and Institutes of the University are interdisciplinary in approach. The emphasis on interdisciplinarity is likewise evident in the University’s critical thrust areas for applied and basic research: poverty alleviation, environment and safety, globalization, applied technologies and youth-at-risk³. This indicates that the faculty and graduate students are being encouraged to better equip themselves to effectively respond to and analyze the complexities of problems in our communities. For this reason, there is a need to further

¹ These policies and guidelines were a result of a review process undertaken in the various College Research Councils and Council of Chairs since the 3rd term, AY 2008-2009. These were subsequently approved by the University Research Council.

² The terms “multidisciplinary” and “interdisciplinary” are often used interchangeably. However, distinctions are also being made between these two terms, and with “transdisciplinary”. What is emerging is a continuum of interdisciplinarity (Davies & Delvin, 2007). At one end are multidisciplinary projects consisting of people from various disciplines who come together to address a common problem while retaining their perspectives in analyzing aspects of the problem. We might say that what we would call as interdisciplinary researches are in the midpoint, aiming to address problems through a combination of disciplinary resources to gain an integrated view to a given problem (Medicus, n.d.). At the extreme end are the transdisciplinary researches which involve a disintegration of disciplinary walls and the emergence of a new discipline (Medicus, n.d.). This latter approach is used to transcend disciplinary boundaries, which are still to be found in multi- and interdisciplinary research, to investigate contexts in which problems are embedded (Marco, 2009)

³ The University’s critical thrust areas for basic and applied research were announced by Br. Armin Luistro, Chancellor and President, in a speech he delivered during the Faculty General Assembly on May 21, 2007.

provide support for interdisciplinary researches by setting up standard procedures that will allow members of our academic community to collaboratively pursue problems from different disciplinary perspectives and methodologies.

The Proposed URCO Policies for Interdisciplinary Research Projects under the Faculty Research Program

1. A team must be composed of at least three members, coming from different Departments and/or Colleges. From among the team members, a project coordinator is designated to supervise the collaborative implementation of the project, and to oversee the preparation of the integrative project report. The project coordinator must be a full-time faculty member. Part-time faculty members may also be involved as members of an interdisciplinary team.

Each project team member will be working on a particular component of, or task within, a project. Each member is responsible for the project or task within a project assigned to him or her. Each member shall contribute their disciplinary perspectives from conceptualization of the project, to the implementation of the actual research, and to the writing of the research report/paper.

2. The topic of the research must preferably be within the University's critical thrust areas: Poverty, Youth-at-Risk, Globalization, Environment and Safety, Applied technologies
3. The research proposal shall be endorsed by the heads of all departments to which members of the project team are members of. Aside from presenting a brief review of the relevant literature, a conceptual frame (if applicable), the problem statement(s), and the methodological plan(s), the proposal should also specify the tasks assigned to each member of the project team.
4. The review and approval of research proposals shall be undertaken during the College Research Council meeting of the designated project coordinator's College. The College Research Directors of the other Colleges of which the other members of the interdisciplinary project team are members of will also be present and will participate in the deliberation. The review and approval of the proposals shall be done in accordance with URCO policies and standards.
5. Monitoring of the implementation of the project shall follow URCO guidelines. For monitoring purposes, the project team will be asked to accomplish a workplan upon the approval of the project proposal.

6. When a project is not completed within the prescribed time period, the research team may formally request for a renewal of the project. The request for renewal shall be approved by the body which approved the implementation of the project, i.e. the College Research Council of the Project Coordinator's College, together with the College Research Directors of the other Colleges of which the other member of the interdisciplinary team are members of.
7. A maximum of 9-unit-deloding may be granted to the project coordinator for a whole academic year, while the other members of the team may be given a maximum of six units deloding for an academic year. Deloding and funding support for project members shall follow URCO guidelines.
8. An interdisciplinary research project can be undertaken in addition to one on-going URCO Faculty Research Program project, subject to the approval of the College Research Council.