

RUW Research Centre Strategic Plan
Royal University for Women
Draft: January 2016

Background

The RUW Research Centre was approved in AY 2012-2013 as part of the Royal University for Women's organizational development, to be implemented according to the university's Strategic Plan. RUW practices a multidisciplinary approach in its commitment to excellence in teaching, research and service. The research centre would enhance and provide additional support for RUW's continued multidisciplinary development. In recognition that increased research production is one of the Higher Education Council's priorities, the RUW Research Centre will be a faculty-driven initiative that provides research training and resources to enable faculty to increase the impact and prominence of scholarly research in the region and to contribute to international scholarship and assist those.

The RUW Research Centre will help fill the current gaps that the Higher Education Council has identified in the Kingdom of Bahrain's current research system, such as the provision of a stronger network between university institutions and industries. It will also build a research administrative capacity to support complex and externally funded research. The centre will also better equip and support individuals conducting research in fields identified by the HEC as "high priority," including financial services, Islamic banking and finance, insurance, health services and public health, gulf region health and translational medicine, and information and communications technology.

The Research Centre will assist RUW in meeting these Key Performance Indicators of the HEC (2014), which are necessary in contributing to the higher education system development of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Research has been identified nationally as an essential element in Bahrain shifting its economy from a 'rentier' state into a productive competitive economy globally that requires a knowledge-based economy. A strong research capacity is seen as necessary in building strong graduate programmes, attracting top international faculty and strengthening the higher education system, as well as providing socio-cultural continuation.¹ More specific goals most relevant to universities include the following elements that need to be increased:

- the number of researchers at universities and private enterprises
- the number of persons with doctorate degrees
- peer reviewed journal publication output
- ranking of Bahraini universities in international rankings
- the number of collaborative research projects between universities and private enterprises
- the number of joint research projects with regional or international universities
- the number of research projects funded by regional or international agencies
- the number of national research networks
- the number of highly qualified and motivated researchers working in priority areas that will contribute to an improvement in intellectual capital
- the number of highly qualified Bahraini scientists who studied or conducted research abroad in priority areas
- the number of participants in regional/international research networks in the priority areas²

¹ Higher Education Council. (n.d.) National Research Strategy 2014-2024.

² "National Research Strategy 2014-2024: Creating a Smart Bahrain Based on Knowledge & Innovation" Higher Education Council.

RUW Research Centre Vision and Mission

The current approved vision of the Research Centre is the following:

- “The Centre will strive to lead in the field of research on issues related to women in the region.
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- Through research, documentation and collaboration, the Centre will support women to be confident, forward thinking, assume leadership in all fields of human endeavor.”³

In addition to the above, the research centre’s vision is guided by that of RUW, which places an emphasis on building a strong academic network, providing research support to faculty and students, promoting a research culture at RUW, housing specialized research units and striving to become a leading site of scholarship in the region, emphasizing RUW’s vision to “become the regional leader in academic excellence for women.”

The approved mission of the Centre includes the following aims:

- “To be an interdisciplinary research unit, focusing on women’s issues including leadership, equality and representation.
- To raise awareness of the importance of promoting women’s empowerment, participation and voice in decision making.
- To inculcate social consciousness about a gender just society.”⁴

It is suggested that the mission be expanded to include a number of practices that are common to research centres generally: cultivating a strong research culture, providing sessions in which faculty in related areas can form interdisciplinary teams for research; and help build the university’s research resource capability through increased research methods literature and software, among many other activities that are outlined below. The RUW Research Centre will support existing teaching and research activities at the university; initiate and lead additional training; provide online and paper-based resources; host research presentations; establish linkages to local, regional and international research organisations and programmes. It will also provide advisory research services to external agencies; take a leading role in strengthening the research culture at RUW; and house specialised research units, such as the Regional Women’s Studies Unit.⁵ In addition, the Research Centre will become a publishing centre for original work in a number of formats. All of these goals are intended to be developed by implementing RUW’s research vision, mission and strategic priorities and initiatives, and building on the RUW Academic Staff Research Plan (2015-2016).

³ http://www.ruw.edu.bh/research_centre_vision.php

⁴ http://www.ruw.edu.bh/research_centre.php

RUW Research Themes

As per RUW Strategic Plan (2011 – 2016), research themes are introduced to address the vision and the mission of RUW. Each faculty council proposes research themes under which faculty members conduct research. At the same time faculty members also conduct research under their own field of study and interest.

The following are the current research themes that were approved for the colleges and CGS approximately 3 years ago. These themes are due for a regular review and so may change over the coming year:

College of Arts & Design

- Art Appreciation
- Sustainable Design

College of Business & Financial Sciences

- Women in Management
- Islamic Banking

College of Information Technology

- Next Generation of Internet Governance, Intelligence, and Security

College of Law

- Arab and International Legal Studies
- Arab Regionalism, Cooperation and Integration among the GCC countries

Centre for General Studies

- TESOL – Teaching ESL in the Middle East
- Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- Women and Leadership

RUW Research Centre Functional Structure

The RUW Research Centre will perform nine core functions (see Figure 1 below):

1. Coordinate research activities between academics and institutions;
2. Train RUW students, RUW faculty, post-doctorates, visiting professors, interested academic institutions and interested professional institutions in qualitative and quantitative methodology and research;
3. Advise external bodies in research design and with research results;
4. Promote a research culture within the university and within the centre’s local network;
5. Construct and maintain a database to provide research support;
6. House specialised research units;
7. Host colloquia and conferences;
8. Produce and organise publications;
9. Policy and Research Review

The centre will have prioritised scopes of focus: first, supporting existing and proposed faculty members’ academic interests across all faculties and disciplines; second, leading the production of local and regional research; and third, contributing to international literature and creating research linkages globally.



Figure 1: Functional Structure of the RUW Research Centre

1. Coordination
 - 1.1. Establish local, regional and international connections with higher education academic institutions, professional institutions and research centres;
 - 1.2. Provide contact lists and databases that faculty members can use to connect with other academics internally, nationally and internationally to promote and support the conduct of international, comparative, and interdisciplinary research;
 - 1.3. Connect with academics who have developed new specific research methods that are regionally and culturally appropriate;
 - 1.4. Work closely with the Centre for Excellence for Women's Empowerment to deliver workshops on research and entrepreneurship;
 - 1.5. Liaise with the Graduate Studies and Research Committee, Community Education Committee, Student Affairs and the Library at RUW;
 - 1.6. Liaise with the Institute of International Education to facilitate the Fulbright Program for international educational exchange.
2. Training
 - 2.1. Conduct workshops and short courses for RUW faculty, students and, potentially on a fee-paying basis, non-RUW participants
 - 2.1.1. Training in traditional qualitative and quantitative research methods
 - 2.1.2. Training in new and emerging methods (e.g., indigenous research).
 - 2.1.3. Training in scholarly preparation and community practice areas (see: Appendix 2)
 - 2.2. Host visiting researchers, including scholars on exchange and visiting programmes, post-docs and visiting professors;
 - 2.3. Host research courses from other universities for specialized sessions;
 - 2.4. Train student research assistants for a variety of research activities such as literature reviews, collecting and organizing data, performing statistical procedures and coding of data;
 - 2.5. Train interested researchers from RUW and from other universities and colleges in research methodologies and data collection methods
3. Advising
 - 3.1. Provide advisory research services for RUW faculty developing research design and methodology, and in preparing research funding applications;
 - 3.2. Advise RUW faculty on research-related projects throughout Bahrain;
 - 3.3. Produce research on Bahrain that will help inform institution and nation building, for example, the economic, political, cultural and educational systems;
 - 3.4. Serve in a consultative capacity to ministries and agencies that wish to be advised on research designs or analysis research results
4. Promoting a Research Culture
 - 4.1. Display faculty publications;
 - 4.2. Maintain a database on research funding sources;
 - 4.3. Collect and circulate information about conferences;
 - 4.4. Hold an internal research forum every two weeks;
 - 4.5. Generate and circulate a monthly one-page newsletter that highlights news on research funding, conferences, books and new software;
 - 4.6. Initiate the development of faculty home pages that report on scholarly achievements of individual faculty members;
 - 4.7. Offer research facilities for piloting data collection instruments and doing data collection such as interviews and focus groups, including those that may have audio-visual

recording requirements. Revenue would be generated through the rent of rooms for focus groups and interviews.

5. Constructing a Research Design and Methods Database
 - 5.1. Provide support for research through building and maintaining a collection of research guides, research methods literature and other online and hard and soft copy sources;
 - 5.2. Establish and maintain an online inventory of RUW faculty research topics and methods;
 - 5.3. Maintain a power point collection of relevant workshop and training materials.

6. Housing Specialized Research Units
 - 6.1. The centre will house specialised research units, such as:
 - 6.1.1. The Regional Women’s Studies Unit,⁶ which will:
 - 6.1.1.1. Document and preserve data about women’s issues in Bahrain and in the region for future reference;
 - 6.1.1.2. Construct a database of women related studies in Bahrain and the region, including women pioneers in the region and appropriate elements from courses taught at RUW;
 - 6.1.1.3. Organize roundtable discussions, guest lectures and panels on women related issues;
 - 6.1.1.4. Facilitate the collaboration between RUW faculty and students to conduct an RUW research project on women in Bahrain;
 - 6.1.1.5. Prioritize research topics and methodologies applicable to women
 - 6.1.2. Additional research units to be established, with foci such as energy and environmental issues.

7. Hosting Academic Events
 - 7.1. Host academic conferences, including those that are revenue generating;
 - 7.2. Regularly hold guest lectures and colloquia. Speakers and audience members can include subject experts, employers, the community and alumni.

8. Publications
 - 8.1. Establish an interdisciplinary or regional academic journal;
 - 8.2. Establish an occasional papers series that would be published throughout the academic year;
 - 8.3. Generate an electronic newsletter and blog with updates about latest publications, research initiatives and events on the RUW website;
 - 8.4. Produce single-authored books or edited book collections;
 - 8.5. Assemble transcripts of lectures hosted by the Research Centre online. This would engage international readership and extend the centre’s activities towards interested members of the public

⁶ Proposal: Change “Women’s Studies Unit” to “Regional Women’s Studies Unit.” The term “Women’s Studies” is heavily politicized. San Diego University defines Women’s Studies as a “rigorous, interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and transnational discipline rooted in feminist theory and shaped by the social sciences, humanities and natural sciences, as well as movements for social justice.” Whilst Women’s Studies is a transnational discipline, the movements for social justice that shape its literature are primarily American, such as the Women’s Rights Movement in the United States (1848-Present). The addition, the term “Regional” would identify the MENA region (with a focus on the Arabian Gulf) as the unit’s research interest. In renaming the unit, the Royal University for Women would also pioneer a necessary academic sub-field that closely examines women’s issues in the Middle Eastern context. This is necessary for the cultivation of focused research.

- 8.6. Focus on the publication of material in Arabic for distribution to the Arabic-speaking readership. Original research may be conducted in Arabic or translated into Arabic from other languages.

9. Policy and Research Review

An annual review and planning process will be conducted on both: 1) adjustments necessary to general policy and the structure and functions of the research centre; 2) as well as the continuing activities planning on an annual basis. The long term (10 year) plan, once this strategic plan is approved, can be filled in on a general basis with more specific activities in a 2-3 year basis. This allows for adjustments to be made depending on funding levels, staffing levels, faculty research activity levels, and student research activities.

- 9.1. Acquire research funds;
- 9.2. Coordinate research incentives available at RUW, such as internal grants;
- 9.3. Approve of research proposals;
- 9.4. Develop research policies and their provisions

RUW Research Centre Organizational Structure

The final organizational structure of the centre will develop over five years, as the full set of pre-approved functions become established and operational (see 5 Year Strategic Plan). It will include an RUW advisory committee, an external advisory committee, the Academic Vice President, the RUW Research Centre Director/Dean and administration and research staff members. Different specialized research units would appear on this organizational structure depending on decisions made by the university.

- **RUW Research Advisory Committee:**
 - The RUW advisory committee will be comprised of the President, the Academic Vice President, Director/Dean, and a representative from each college at RUW, as well as a representative from GS&R. It will also be comprised of five external members from various disciplines who will be nominated by the Board, President and Academic Vice President will nominate them.
 - The advisory committee will advise on the development of the RUW Research Centre's strategy as well as its academic and business plans and policy development. External members will inform the RUW Research Centre on developments in government agencies, such as national targets, national programs, major policy changes and research funding initiatives in the country, and relevant private sector agencies on private sector developments.

- **President:** The RUW President will be the chair of the RUW advisory committee and will provide the necessary direction to the research Centre's vision and mission in an advisory capacity.
- **Academic Vice President:** The RUW Research Centre would report to the Academic Vice President.
- **Director/ Dean:** The Director/Dean's role is to manage RUW Research Centre's affairs and to guide its strategic development, as well as help build its research capacity. The Director/Dean is the formal channel of communication between the RUW Research Centre and RUW's senior staff. The Director will report to the academic vice president in relation to university matters.
- **Administration and Research Staff Members:**
 - The Director would be responsible for both administrative and research functions.
 - Administration staff will facilitate the conduct of the Centre's nine functions.
 - Research staff will engage in research that advances RUW's strategic development, and will be active across the range of research related activities: publications, research training, developing funding applications, preparing for conferences, and publication. Its activities over time could include knowledge transfer activities to the public and private sectors.

Strategic Plan

Goals, Objectives and KPIs

Once the rest of the plan has been approved the detailed list of goals and objectives with their KPI mapping can be done.

Budgeting

Budget figures will have to be determined with Finance.

The HEC has directed that 3% minimum of a university's net revenue be dedicated to research. When the basic list of requirements in the short term is approved, a budget, in consultation with finance, can be developed that meets HEC requirements. The following general categories relevant to a research centre will be used as below with items required in the initial 3-year period:

1. Human resources

For the first year, CGS is carrying the workload through one of the instructors, whose load is halftime teaching, and halftime research. The Director of CGS is carrying developmental administration and research-related activities (e.g., research methods workshops), and the secretary of CGS is providing staff support.

2. Infrastructure

This applies mostly to rooms that would be needed for colloquia, training sessions, piloting and conducting focus groups, interviews and administering survey instruments. For the first two years, there is adequate space, but as the research centre grows and develops it will need dedicated space with the appropriate furniture for a range of research related activities.

3. Equipment

Currently, everyone is supplied with a laptop and access to printing services and support from ICT. However, there may need to be the purchase of specialised recording (audio & visual) equipment that can be loaned to faculty conducting focus groups and interviews. Once visiting faculty and post-docs are added, equipment will need to be available for them. The centre will need its own photocopying and printing equipment. It will also require additional power point projectors, and related equipment.

4. Research Resources: Books, Journals & Software, and e-sources (Documentaries)

The research centre will need dedicated budget for a broad range of research approaches and methods texts in hard copy, as well as subscription to at least 2 specialised journals: one that is for qualitative research and another for quantitative research. The RC will also need to acquire software that is used for qualitative research, initially NVIVO, and later may need to add software for qualitative and quantitative (in this case, procedures that SPSS does not cover), as well as documentaries in various research methods.

Preferably, the RC will also be able to acquire book length publications of famous and high quality research studies, as well as ensuring that adequate journals are available that address research matters including famous (or in admin terms, 'bench mark' studies) in the disciplines that RUW has degrees in.

5. Office Supplies & Miscellaneous

Additional budget is required for printing and other consumable office supplies since the CGS budget was not allotted to include many research activities. In addition, there should be a budget for refreshments provided at longer, workshop type sessions.

6. Guest Lecture Expenses & Conference Travel

Probably beginning in the 2nd year, there may be expenses involving travel and honoraria for guests specialised in particular research methods, and conference travel in the region involving focussed research issues and/or held at research centres.

7. Revenue

The Centre could develop quickly into a provider of specialised research methods training for higher education, government and the private sector, as well as providing contracted services for various stages in research projects (to be expanded).

Resources

After five years of consistent development, implementing all of the functions, the RUW Research Center will need the following resources:

- A physical space that includes the **Director/Dean's** office, secretarial staff space, research administrator offices, post-doc offices, and space for visiting faculty. The centre would need to be allocated a minimum of eight offices once fully developed and staffed;
- A full time dedicated space for running workshops and colloquia;
- A room with equipment (such as computers and office supplies) and a half FTE IT support staff member. This member could be shared with the university;
- A specialized collection of research materials and equipment as well as training space (video, audio, space for role-playing, helping people with interviews and ethnographic observation, with artifacts and cultural objects) that is independent of the RUW Library;
- A budget that would include the purchase of coding programs such as SPSS/STATA for quantitative analysis and ATLAS.ti for qualitative analysis. Can be shared with Library.

Until then, the RUW Research Centre will share equipment and facilities, acquiring necessary individual resources according to these five annual stages (please see Section 9 above for the incremental way in which the annual plans are developed):

	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Human Resources	Acting Director, Women's Studies Unit Senior Officer, CGS Secretary, ICT support	College faculty members will also participate in RC activities as they relate to their own research projects such as conducting research workshops and presenting on research design and methodology.	Director of Research, Two Officers, RC Secretary, ICT		
Space	Physical space: CGS offices, SC Classrooms for workshops Virtual Space: research@ruw.edu.bh email address		One office for visiting professors and postdocs (with furniture)		
Equipment	Technology and equipment available in classrooms	Upgrade Equipment (Printer, Xerox Machine)	Laptop for Research Centre		
Office Supplies	CGS Office Supplies	Research Centre Office Supplies: Cartridges, pen, paper, etc.			
Books and Journal Resources	Existing library resources	Book budget			

(Hard copy and soft copy)					
Software	Existing software	NVivo			
Budget		Honoraria	Travel		

Functions and Activities (Planning Year, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018*)

	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the research forum to coordinate presentations that are complementary. • Liaise with the centre for excellence and GS&R 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with colleges to contribute support to individual and group research both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have an MOU for research exchange purposes with at least one foreign university/research institute • Establish a relationship with institutions in Bahrain. • Liaise with academics and institutions in Gulf countries, particularly those conducting gender specific research • Begin PR with the Gulf countries. • Organize international educational exchange via the Fulbright Program.

	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec: The centre held a research workshop on ethnographic research approaches and methods • Feb: The centre will host a research workshop in quantitative methodology • March: The centre will host a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin expanding the range of research methods training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and regularize the workshop sessions. • Establish a short course series that is certificate or diploma level.

	qualitative methodology workshop in hermeneutic research		
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	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin advising RUW on external projects held across Bahrain. 		

	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Promoting a Research Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a webpage for faculty members' scholarly achievements that would include conference presentations, journal article publications, book chapter and book publications, as well as guest lectures 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent our space and facilities for research data collection (rooms suitable for individual interviews and focus group sessions).

	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Constructing a Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating an online inventory of faculty members' research specializations, including topics and styles of research. • Begin identifying specialists in research methods in the Gulf who could be guest speakers. This would include particularly women researching women in the Gulf region • Expand the centre's webpage to include links to conferences and journals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website should be fully functional as a database, with a calendar for events with the options to book rooms for workshops or data collection purposes. • Distribution list for the newsletter. • Start a database for research funding sources in the Gulf • Continue developing the centre's webpage to include links to other pages, providing more detailed information on and links to journals, book publishers (including their instructions for 	

		authors), conferences, funding sources, university research support materials webpages, links also to the sites with legitimate journal and publisher rankings, including Women's studies centres, research fora, and journals and books.	
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	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Housing Specialized Research Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up and start a database of studies (journal articles, books, reports, etc.) on women in Bahrain and in the region, including women pioneers in Bahrain and appropriate elements from courses taught at RUW. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the collaboration between RUW faculty and students to create an RUW research project on Women in Bahrain Conduct a roundtable discussion on women's related issues in Bahrain Continue to develop a database of studies on women in Bahrain and in the region, including women pioneers in Bahrain and appropriate elements from courses taught at RUW, including ordering books for the library collection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize conducted research into a monograph, to be published by the Regional Women's Studies Unit

	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Hosting Academic Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April: The centre will host the first annual international research conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a regular research colloquium series, including some that are focussed on research on women. 	

	<p>at RUW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin plans for the next year's colloquium series and round table works (see next column) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a second international conference. • Arranging regular 5 minute updates on the RC books, journals, equipment and activities during the regular Research Forums • Facilitating round table workshops for faculty members (and graduate students) working on related topics or types of research design for peer feedback on research proposals, data collection instruments, and other research related issues. • Late February/Early March: The centre should host a 'Researching Women's Leadership' colloquium for RUW undergraduate students, graduate students and interested faculty. The colloquium will have guest presenters who are in leadership positions and researching women's leadership. The plan includes 4-5 presentations, along with 3 research workshops that are most appropriate for women's leadership studies (styles of interviewing, focus groups and using journaling or diaries that are gender culturally sensitive or "indigenous" research methods). 	
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	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate two issues of a Research Centre newsletter • Launch an RUW Research Centre Blog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate a monthly newsletter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch an interdisciplinary Gulf Studies peer-reviewed journal (with an international board that will emphasize participants from the Middle East) • Publish a monograph on Regional Women's Studies

			• Launch an occasional paper or other monograph series
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	Planning Year	2016-2017	2017-2018
Research Policy and Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a long-range operational plan that details budget and staffing. • Implement and support RUW’s research policy. 		

Appendix I: Proposed Initiatives Following the Research Leadership and Creating Capacity Workshop at Applied Science University

Proposed Initiative A: Budget

The HEC has directed 3% of the university’s net revenue to be dedicated to research. In line with this directive, the RUW Research Centre will prepare a budget draft on an approved strategic plan for approval.

Proposed Initiative B: RUW Research Centre Blog

Professor Riyadh Hamza highlighted the importance of transparency, knowledge management, the transfer of knowledge and the use of technology in Bahrain. An RUW Research Centre Blog would help the RUW Research Centre meet this goals, as well as introduce the centre to a broader audience online. The blog may have a weekly post from the centre, as well as pre-

approved guest posts from RUW faculty and RUW undergraduate and graduate students. Should this blog have enough online hits, it may perform under a revenue-generating capacity.

Proposed blog post topics:

- Welcome note
- The HEC Research Strategy (and related documents and links)
- The Art and Science of Doing Research
- Creating Research Capacity and Strategies
- The Impact of Doing Research
- Research Impact and Innovation: Principles and Implementation
- Research Publications
- Funding, and the Cost of, Research
- Building a Teaching-Research Partnership
- Research Ethics: Principles and Design
- Gender Sensitive Research Methods and Practices
- Culture Sensitive Research Methods and Practices
- Knowledge Management