

## **Partnership Tool: Research MOU**

A research Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signals that there is a shared interest in a working relationship between two or more institutions. Its purpose is to formally confirm the willingness of the institutions to collaborate in mutually beneficial areas—whether for a long-term relationship or in support of a more specific research endeavor. Captured within this written document are shared goals, areas of interest, and joint activities planned between institutions. An MOU could be a binding or a non-binding agreement. Negotiations around intellectual property, financial or resource commitments, or other terms that create specific obligations, may necessitate the use of another mechanism (e.g. research collaboration agreement) . An MOU is ultimately a starting point for future collaborations mediated by other agreements along the lines of the general themes addressed in the MOU.

### **PARAMETERS**

- Allows all parties to clearly state their objectives and goals from the anticipated collaboration. This makes for less uncertainty and prevents unexpected disputes later.
- Provides a blueprint for any future agreements the institutions may enter into.
- Can also provide an opportunity for external promotion (for example, a media release) with the intent for both parties to work together.
- Not designed for highly detailed terms and conditions for a specific project

Key Questions to Ask Before Starting an MOU:

- Does a pre-existing MOU or other agreement with the partner institution already exist?
- Is it likely to result in increased research funding, joint publications, HQP trained, or other research outputs?
- Are we able to showcase SFU's research strengths and its researchers while enhancing SFU's reputation as a leading research-intensive university?
- What are the shared values, purposes, desired outcomes and overarching vision for this collaboration?
- What are the unique interests of the two parties in terms of purposes or outcomes of the research?

### **PROCESS**

If a research MOU is thought to be the best tool for moving a collaboration forward, reach out to [research\\_contract@sfu.ca](mailto:research_contract@sfu.ca) to get started. Important to note that for each MOU request, a signature sheet is required to indicate that the proposed activities are approved by your Chair and Dean. Once the terms are finalized, a Contract Approval Memo (CAM) is circulated to PI, Chair and Dean for approval of final terms and acknowledgement of special considerations if applicable.

A Research Contracts Officer assigned to your request will create a draft MOU and negotiate with the other party should that party wish to revise the draft. If the other party insists on using their MOU template, *ORS* will work with you to review and negotiate the other party's draft.

The timeline for developing an MOU (reaching consensus) varies, based on things like customized additions to the template (usually the specific objectives and goals behind the MOU), how busy each party is to work on drafts and to respond to edits, ease of negotiation with the partner, the complexity of the relationship, and more. During the development of the MOU you might need to consult with multiple internal stakeholders, including (depending on your own role in this process) the lead researcher(s), SFU Dean, SFU Staff. In this phase discussions (internal and external) include but are not limited to, the scope of the partnership, timelines, departments involved, the approach, anticipated future funding, and the purpose.

Once parties finalize and sign the MOU, collaboration can begin.

### **Helpful Resources**

- Read SFU's External Research Funding Agreements (R10.01) [policy](#) and [procedure for approval](#).
- Read about the [Indirect Costs Recovery](#) of External Research Funding Agreements.

### **Contacts**

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