

EJAAD

Code of Practice

1.0

September 2018

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List of Abbreviations and Definitions

ABBREVIATIONS

The below abbreviations are listed in the alphabetical order.

AFP	Academia Focal Point
Co-PI	Co-Principal Investigator
Co-I	Co-Investigator
CTR	Cost, Time and Resources
EOI	Expression of Interest
IATI	Institute for Advanced Technology Integration
ICV	In-Country Value
IFP	Industrial Focal Point
JIAF	Joint Industry Academia Project
PI	Principal Investigator for a research project
R&D	Research and Development
RA	Research Assistant
RI	Research Institution

DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In construing this guideline, the following expressions shall have the meanings and definitions hereby assigned to them except where the context otherwise requires:

Academia Focal Point (AFP):	A research institution staff responsible for liaising with Ejaad on the processes of EOI and research proposals appraisal and submission, and subsequent contracting and progress evaluation of research projects. The AFP is appointed by the RI
Co-Investigator (Co-I):	A researcher with PhD qualification or equivalent who is employed (affiliated to) by a national Research Institution and will be involved with the PI in the scientific development or implementation of the Research Project

Consultant:	An expert in a specific field involved in the research project to provide scientific advice, improved implementation of research, and/or technology transfer
Contract	The agreement entered into between the parties for the provision of services
Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)	A researcher who is delegated to lead the research project during the absence of the PI.
Deliverables	Tangible results, outcomes, reports, conclusions and/or recommendations as to practical ways to implement such deliverables emerging throughout the execution of the scope of services
Expression of Interest (EOI)	A formal pre-proposal submitted in response to a posted industrial challenge. It is used to express a researcher interest, qualifications and expertise in tackling the challenge as well as to provide the sponsoring company with a high-level overview of the proposed solution
Focal Point	The individual and/or committee appointed by the organization to be the main point of contact with other parties for any matter pertaining to Ejaad.
Industrial Challenge	An issue or a problem faced by practitioners that do not have a clear or appropriate solution(s) available. It typically needs a great mental and/or physical effort in order to be solved successfully
Industrial Focal Point (IFP)	An industry staff responsible for liaising with Ejaad on the submission of industrial challenges and subsequent processes of proposals evaluation, contracting and progress appraising. The IFP is appointed by the industrial company
Post-doctoral/Research Fellow	A person holding a PhD degree and involved in a research project as a full-time researcher
Principal Investigator (PI)	The researcher responsible for leading the Research Project. The PI is required to be the holder of a PhD or equivalent and to be an employee by the RI
Project Team	All investigators and such other personnel assigned to the Research Project
Research Assistant (RA)	Local or non-local contract personnel hired on a term basis to be directly involved in the Research Project

Research Institution (RI)	A research or academic institution employing an Investigator and having the infrastructure and capacity to carry out part or the entirety of the Research Project
Research Proposal	A formal application submitted in response to a posted industrial challenge provided that EOI has been submitted and approved by sponsoring company.
Support Staff	An employee providing support to research projects and falling into the category of craftsman or secretarial and clerical staff;
Technical Committee	A committee formed per Joint Industry Academia Project (JIAP) comprising a representative of the funding company, PI of the research project and a member(s) representing Ejaad. It is responsible to monitor the progress of the projects and assure effective implementation of the work plan, drive measurable KPI for the project, and produce a value realization plan through deployment, commercialization, etc.
Technician	An employee with technical knowledge and experience, who performs, full or partial scientific and technical tasks within the Research Project under the supervision of an Investigator;
Research Information Management System	Online portal used to manage all pre and post-award activities of a project. These include submissions by PIs, evaluations by IFPs, progress, and final reporting;

I. OVERVIEW OF EJAAD

Ejaad is a national initiative founded by The Research Council (TRC) and the Industry with in-kind support from the Ministry of Oil and Gas (MoG)

Taking cognisance of recommendations of the Oman Energy R&D Summit 2016 in developing a nationwide R&D protocol, Ejaad has emerged as a supply-and-demand platform for the purpose of pursuing the Oman Energy R&D Protocol as well as a marketplace to connect academic research and know-how to industry needs, and vice versa.

It is a membership-based digital platform where industry, academia and government can interact and engage in energy-related research and innovation activities.

Ejaad as a platform is managed under the TRC protocols and license. A ring-fenced team from the TRC, Industry and MoG is deployed for overall operational management of Ejaad system.

Ejaad Objectives

- Connect academic research to industry needs
- Promote industry-industry, academia-academia and industry-academia collaboration
- Maximize In-Country Value (ICV) by routing business R&D requests to local academia
- Deploy, commercialize and transfer-technology of research outcome

I.1 Research Areas

Current Ejaad's research domain comprises of five thematic areas of high importance to the Sultanate. These include:

- Oil and Gas (e.g., EOR, IOR, Well integrity, Tight Gas Studies, etc.)
- Energy (e.g., Energy efficiency, Conservation of Energy, etc.)
- Renewable Energy (e.g., Solar, Wind, Geothermal, Biofuel, etc.)
- Water (e.g., Groundwater, Industrial water, Produced water, Desalination, etc.)
- Environment

Other themes are subject to future expansions

I.2 Membership

Ejaad is a membership-based digital platform that aims to create value for its members by facilitating collaborative R&D within the five thematic research areas specified under section I.1.

Ejaad management encourages the membership enrollment of all organizations interested in deals, support or uses of R&D in the above-mentioned areas.

Interested organization can join Ejaad to access, view, and participate in loading challenges or proffer solution. For an organization to join Ejaad, it needs to:

1. Fill-in and sign the *Ejaad membership agreement* the *Oman Energy R&D Protocol*, and email them to (info@ejaad.om). Registration process shall be processed within 30 days. Membership applications can be submitted at any time during the year.
2. Pay the *annual membership fee*, after which the organization is granted an access authorization to the Ejaad platform.

The annual subscription fees are currently set at OMR 2,000/- and RO 500/- for the industrial organizations and academic/research institutions, respectively. The subscription fees are specified to cover the operational expenses and attain self-sustainability.

The organizations embracing the Oman Energy R&D Protocol and Ejaad membership to take note of the following roles and responsibilities, in section 2.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section defines the roles and responsibilities of different entities, staff members and applicants involved in Ejaad operations.

2.1 Steering Committee

Ejaad's Steering Committee helps to steer Ejaad from its establishment to completion, ensuring delivery of its outcomes. Its role is to direct, support and endorse the activities and way forward through monthly meetings. The Steering Committee is made up of representatives of MoG, TRC and PDO.

The Steering Committee shall:

1. Provide Ejaad's long-range plan, policies, guidelines and evaluation strategy
2. Define and help to achieve the project outcomes;
3. Identify Ejaad's research priorities that are of high importance to the Sultanate
4. Identify and monitor potential risks and issues that arise at either the policy or operational level;
5. Monitor timelines and the quality of the project as it develops;
6. Provide advice on the plan and budget for the implementation phases of Ejaad;
7. Provide advice and make decisions about changes to the project as it develops.

2.2 Ejaad Working Team

Ejaad's Working Team is the custodian for the Oman Energy R&D Protocol, it is responsible for developing, improving and executing Ejaad Platform, and for maximizing opportunities for partnerships, networking and information sharing about Ejaad. This team is comprised primarily of staff from MoG, TRC and PDO along with representatives from Energy Industry and Academia. Ejaad's working team reports to Ejaad's steering committee, which takes the final decision.

As outlined in the Oman Energy R&D Protocol, the working team has the following roles:

1. Coordinate the national agenda and set the priorities for the energy-related R&D activities.
2. Coordinate with different organizations in Oman to get them engaged with Ejaad.
3. Establish procedure and criteria for the operation of Ejaad (project posting, proposal selection, fund awarding, staff mobility, facility sharing, etc.)
4. Report the activities of Ejaad to top management at MoG, TRC and Industry partners
5. Produce a rating system that measures Industry & Academia compliance with the protocol.

2.2.1 Technical Committee

For any research project commenced through Ejaad, a Technical Committee shall be formed, per project, comprising representatives of the respective industry (i.e., funding company), the research institution(s) and a member representing Ejaad working team. This Technical Committee shall be responsible to:

1. Produce a practical work plan for the project to assure effective implementation
2. Drive measurable KPI for the project
3. Monitor performance
4. Produce a commercialization plan for the project and align Industry/Academia for project success and value realization.

2.2.2 Peer Reviewers

As internationally renowned specialists in specific research domains, peer reviewers act as referees to provide individual scientific assessments on “Excellence” of Ejaad submissions. Peer reviewers work remotely and deliver their individual reviews by electronic means. These reviews are a paid-for service provided by Ejaad for its members and are carried out on-request by the members prior to the final evaluation of proposals.

Internationally renowned specialists in specific research domains, who act as referees to provide individual scientific assessments on “**Excellence**” of research proposal submitted. Reviewers work remotely and deliver their individual reviews by electronic means. These reviews are typically carried out “on request” and prior to the final evaluation of proposals.

2.3 Industry

All industrial organizations members of Ejaad have the following responsibilities:

1. Assign a focal point to liaise with Ejaad.
2. Provide a list of industrial research challenges and aspiration.
3. Support at least one R&D project initiative per year over the next three years.
4. Endeavour in deploying and commercializing the output of R&D activities into their respective industry, through developing plans or endeavour to adopt some of the outcomes.
5. Provide possible industrial funding; based on submitting research proposals tackling industrial research challenges or consultancy requests.
6. Consider joint industry-industry collaboration on projects of common interest such as thermal applications, tight reservoir development, hydraulic fracturing, water shut-off technologies and others.
7. Endeavour to adopt possible “staff mobility” scheme that facilitates secondment/training of researchers/experts from academia to industry and vice versa.
8. Endeavour to engage in joint-supervision of Postgraduate Students with supervisors from academia.

2.3.1 Industry Focal Point (IFP)

The Industry Focal Point (IFP) is responsible for the following:

1. Become the organization’s focal point in executing and fulfilling the Oman Energy Industry-Academia R&D Protocol requirements.
2. Create awareness about the Protocol within the organization.
3. Attend workshops/events related to the Protocol and its implementation via Ejaad.
4. Become the organization’s point of contact for support, communication and coordination with researchers and Ejaad on all matters related to the Platform and challenge(s) in hand.
5. Responsible for developing “internal” systems or procedures for timely appraising and submitting research challenges, reviewing and approving reports, executing requests, fund release, etc.
6. Validate and keep the information up-to-date in Ejaad in terms of project progress, deliverables, fund release, etc.
7. Keep Ejaad and the research team members up-to-date with any announcements and adjustments in the company’s rules and procedures.
8. Communicate Ejaad activities to the respective departments in the organization.

2.3.1.1 Criteria for IFP

1. A well-qualified individual in the organization with experience in either R&D or Innovation.
2. Should have a rich professional experience, a profound knowledge of the company’s needs and practices, and most importantly should have a strong desire to help in bridging the gap between industry and academia in order to boost up the R&D activities in Oman.

3. Prior research and development experience is an advantage

2.4 Academic/Research Institution

The Research Institution (RI) undertakes the following commitments towards Ejaad and the proposed research project:

1. Provide Ejaad with a candidate to work as an Academic Focal Point (AFP)
2. Provide Ejaad with systematic information on the capabilities and capacities of respective laboratories/consultancies/resources.
3. Provide Ejaad with a list of completed and ongoing R&D and innovation projects.
4. Provide Ejaad with a list of research facilities and equipment.
5. Facilitate access to university facilities and equipment whenever is needed subsequent to the fulfilment of an application process.
6. Offer the appropriate environment and ensure the independence of the PI in carrying out his/her allotted tasks throughout the project;
7. Share the responsibility along with the PI for the success of the research project and the accountability of the research grant;
8. Coordinate with the funding organization on the necessary steps for the protection and exploitation of any valuable Intellectual Property (IP) resulting from the research project;
9. Adopt a “staff mobility” scheme that facilitates secondment/training of researchers/experts from academia to industry and vice versa.
10. Encourage joint-supervision of Postgraduate Students with supervisors from industry.

2.4.1 Academic Focal Point (AFP)

The Academic Focal Point (AFP) is responsible for the following:

1. Become the institution’s focal point in executing and fulfilling the Oman Energy R&D Protocol requirements.
2. Create awareness about the Protocol within the institution.
3. Attend workshops/events related to the Protocol and its implementation via Ejaad.
4. Become the institution’s point of contact for support, communication and coordination with companies and Ejaad on all matters related to the Platform and challenge(s) in hand.
5. Responsible for developing “internal” systems or procedures for timely appraising and submitting proposals, reviewing and approving requests, executing needs, facilitating procurement, etc.
6. Validate and keep the information up-to-date in Ejaad in terms of project progress, deliverables, funds, etc.
7. Keep Ejaad and the related companies up-to-date with any announcements and adjustments in the institution’s rules and procedures.
8. Communicate Ejaad activities to the respective departments in the institutions.

2.4.1.1 Criteria for AFP

1. A well-qualified individual in the institute with experience in either R&D or Innovation.
2. Should have a rich professional experience, a profound knowledge of the institute's capacity and capability, and most importantly should have a strong desire to help in bridging the gap between industry and academia in order to boost up the R&D activities in Oman.
3. Prior research and development experience is an advantage

2.4.2 Principal Investigator

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for drafting, submitting and amending expression of interests (EOIs) and research proposals. This equally includes the management and lead of Research Project to accomplish approved objectives. The financial aspects of the funded research project are also part of the PI's responsibility. All proposals submitted by PIs shall be forwarded through Ejaad to AFP for endorsement before Ejaad and the IFP starts the evaluation process. Further responsibilities include:

1. Ensure that project team members are committed to the research agreement in terms of expenditures, project duration, milestones, and deliverables;
2. Follow up the operational, financial and administrative processes related to the project, such as the timely release of funds, the management of project changes, and equipment procurement and ownership;
3. Keep the project team members up-to-date with any announcements and adjustments in Ejaad rules and procedures.
4. Ensure that the conducted research complies with the bylaws of the Sultanate of Oman as well as the ethical measures.

3. EJAAD GUIDELINES

3.1 Eligibility Criteria

Ejaad welcomes industrial challenges from all industrial organizations that are members of Ejaad. Expression of interests and/or research proposals from researchers in academic and/or research-performing institution affiliated with Ejaad, addressing posted industrial challenges, are also welcomed. Ejaad, however, applies minimum requirements as application eligibility criteria. These are described in the following subsections.

3.1.1 Eligibility Criteria for Industry Challenges

An industry challenge shall meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible for submission in Ejaad.

1. The areas of research on which industrial challenges focus should be drawn from the five major sectors that constitute Ejaad's research focus, which is intrinsically linked to areas of economic and societal importance for the development in the Sultanate
2. Duration specified and budget allocated for research execution of an industrial challenge shall reasonably match the nature of the challenge in hand.

3.1.2 Eligibility Criteria for Principal Investigators

A PI shall meet the following minimum requirements to be eligible for submission of EOI or research proposals in Ejaad. These, however, are subject to modification in light of experiences:

1. PIs have to hold a minimum qualification of a PhD degree, or equivalent, in an academic field of relevance to the industry challenge in hand or Ejaad's thematic areas;
2. PIs have to be hosted by an Oman-based Research Institution at the time of submission of the research proposal;
3. PI has no records of non-compliance to the Omani laws and/or Ejaad guidelines;

3.1.3 Eligibility Criteria for Research Hosting Institution

The research host institution can be any public or private entity located in the Sultanate of Oman. This includes:

- Academic institutions and/or
- Research-performing institution

The followings are minimum eligibility requirements to host a research project:

1. Academic and/or research-performing institutions can host a PI as long as the PI's independence is not constrained by the institute's research strategy;
2. The hosting institution must have the infrastructure and the capacity required to carry out research projects;
3. The hosting Institution has no records of non-compliance to the Omani laws and/or Ejaad guidelines;
4. The hosting institution commits to the following conditions:
 - a. The PI can apply for funding independently but through AFP;
 - b. The PI must manage the research project and its funding and make appropriate resource allocation decisions;
 - c. The PI shall publish independently and invite, as co-authors, only those who have contributed substantially to the reported work;
 - d. The PI shall supervise research team members, including research students, doctoral students or others;
 - e. The PI must have access to reasonable space and facilities for conducting the research work.

3.2 Submission

3.2.1 The Research Submission System

The processes in Ejaad’s research submission system can be classified into three main stages:

- 1- Pre-awarding
- 2- Awarding
- 3- Post-awarding

The submission process in Ejaad typically starts with an industrial challenge being identified by a company and posted by its industrial focal point in Ejaad. The submission of industry challenge and subsequent response from researchers with proposals is designed to follow one of two flow paths based on a selection from IFP. Figure 1 provides an overview of the submission process in which IFP opts to receive an EOI for the posted challenge. Subsequently, PIs of shortlisted EOIs will be notified electronically and requested to submit full proposals. Ultimately, a single proposal shall be selected ending up with a contractual agreement being signed between the parties to embark on the project. The second flow path is a shorter one in which IFP chooses to receive full proposals directly. An overview of the flow path in this submission process is shown in Figure 2.

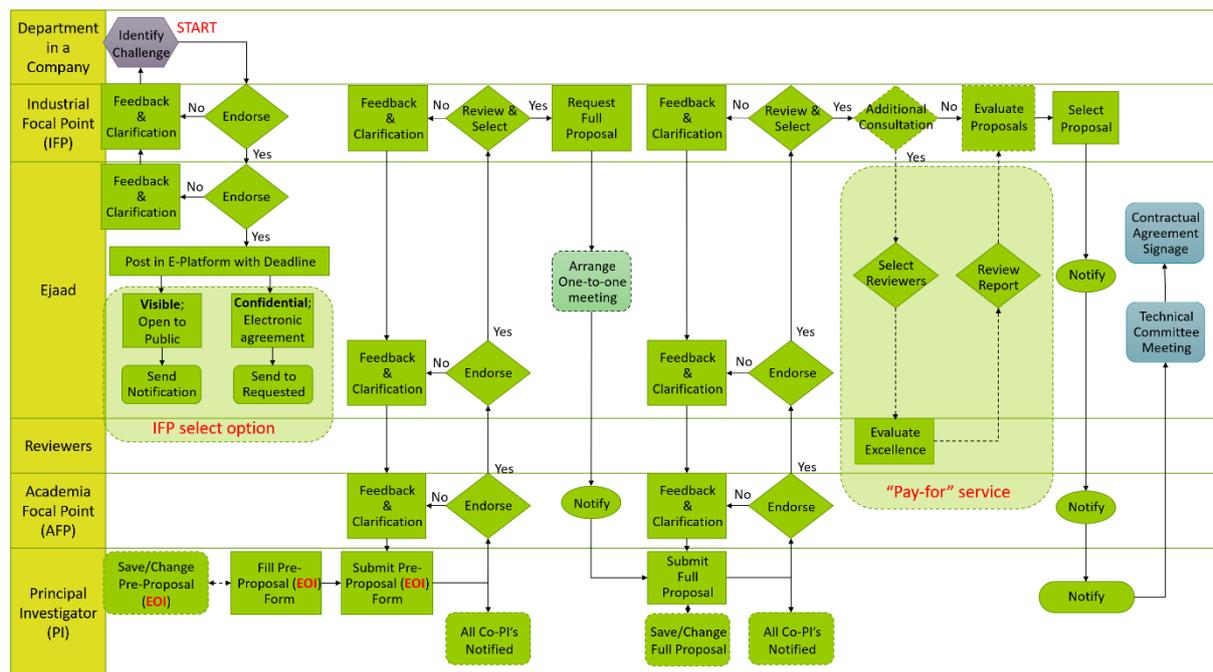


Figure 1: Overview of the submission process with EOI and full proposals options

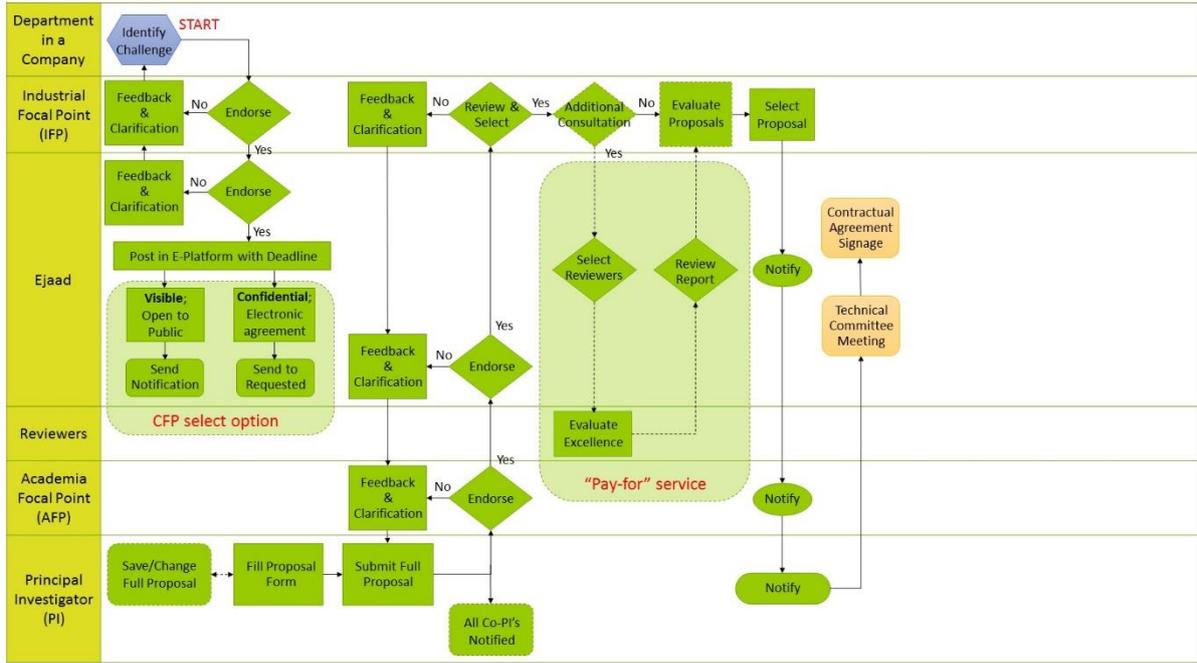


Figure 2: Overview of the submission process with full proposal option only

In the post-awarding stage, the funding company allocate the budget agreed on the research contract, the Industry focal point (IFP) releases a kick-off budget. The PI submit progress report after specific milestone(s), which is reviewed by IFP. Once progress report is approved, IFP releases the budget for next phase. Figure 3 provides an overview of the post-awarding process.

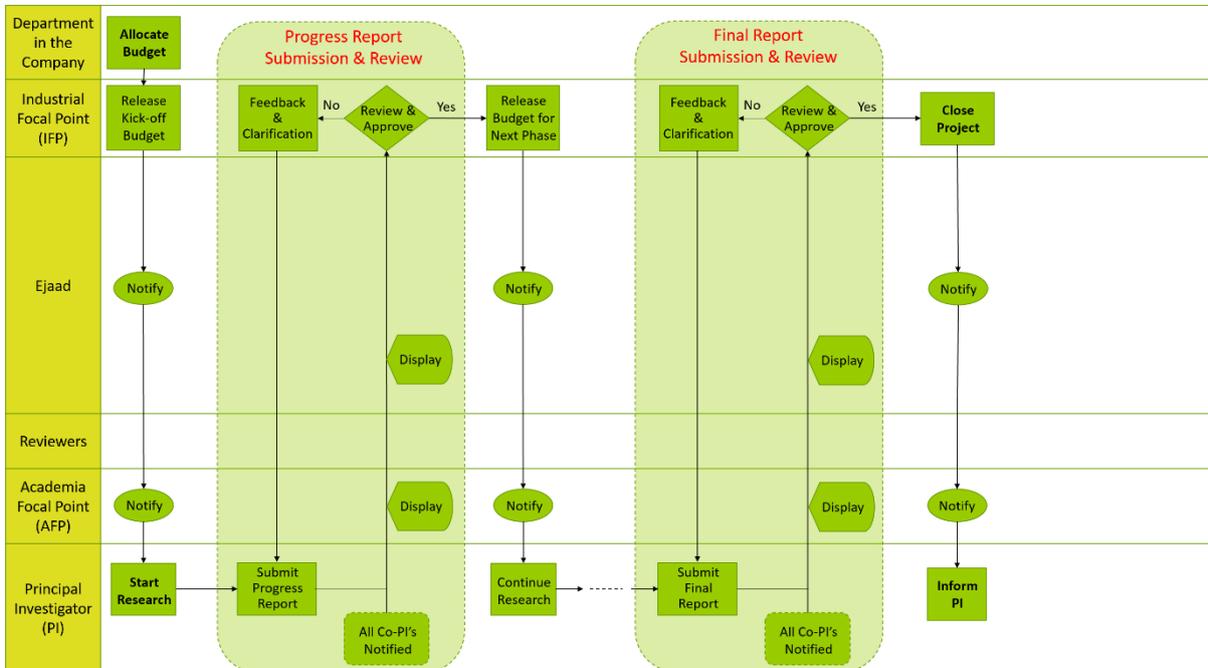


Figure 3: Overview of the post-awarding process

3.2.2 Preparing and Submitting Industry Challenge, EOI and Full Proposal

With an aim of establishing a common language for communication between Ejaad's members from industry and academia, common templates have been prepared and incorporated in the system. All required from members is to simply prepare the information required as per the templates provided in the system and make them visible to relevant parties by simply a one-button click. To facilitate the information gathering and preparation process, all templates used in the system are provided on editable format and ready for use. These templates are provided in a pack that can be downloaded from www.ejaad.om

3.2.3 Information Confidentiality

To accommodate the issue of sharing information that might be deemed as confidential by any of the parties, Ejaad has incorporated confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements that shall be signed and complied by all members.

3.2.4 One-to-one meeting

As soon as the EOIs reviewed and shortlisted by IFP, Ejaad, with request from any of the relevant parties, can set a one-to-one meeting between successful EOI applicants and the respective IFP. These meetings aim to provide the parties with a chance to discuss more details about the industry challenge(s) in-hand and the solution proposed by the researcher with a view to coming up with a more sounding research proposal. It also allows the parties to discuss comments arose in the EOI evaluation process if any.

3.2.5 Acknowledgement of Submission

Once the industry challenge, EOI or full proposal is cleared from the IFP and the PI's institution, respectively, Ejaad team along with all other relevant parties will be electronically notified of the submission. Beside the acknowledgement, this message will contain a unique code for easy tracking and follow up. As part of the submission process, Ejaad team will not modify or edit any submission. Ejaad members are therefore encouraged to carefully review their submissions, as the quality would affect the evaluation and selection processes. Subsequent to submission and whenever necessary, Ejaad may contact IFP, AFP, PI or any other relevant party to clarify questions of eligibility or to verify administrative or liability of data contained in the submission.

3.2.6 Modification and Withdrawal of Industry Challenge, EOI, or Full Proposal

Since the processing of submissions may start immediately after submission, Ejaad can accept no additions, corrections or re-submissions after the Industry Challenge, EOI and Full Proposal have been submitted. Submissions may be modified or withdrawn by submitting a written request to Ejaad through the FP.

3.2.7 Tracking of Submission Status

At any time, it is possible for Ejaad's users to check the status of a submitted and/or under processing industry challenge, EOI or research proposal by simply log on to Ejaad and checking through his/her dashboard.

3.3 Conflict of Interest

Ejaad is committed to supporting R&D without bias and/or conflicts of interest. The conflict of interest may arise if one or more of the cases below applies to Ejaad staff, a peer reviewer or a technical committee member:

1. Involvement in a submitted proposal and/or in its preparation;
2. Standing to benefit directly from a proposal if accepted;
3. Having a family or business relationship with any person representing an applicant in a proposal;
4. Prior employment by one of the proposal's beneficiaries within the previous six months;
5. Being in any other situation that could cast doubt on the member's ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party.

3.4 Evaluation of Submissions

Ejaad is adopting a weighing mechanism for evaluating submissions (EOIs and full proposals) that is including: (1) Novelty of proposed solution 30%, (2) Researcher capability 30%, (3) Added In-Country Value 20%, (4) Duration 10%, and (5) Budget 10%.

The followings have to be noted:

1. Proposals must adequately address the above-mentioned evaluation criteria in order to increase the chance of selection and receive funding.
2. All eligible proposals shall be ranked based on the evaluation criteria before the best being finally selected for funding support.
3. The final decision related to qualifying EOIs and full proposals is fully controlled by the funding organization
4. In case a proposal is disqualified or rejected, the feedback generated in the review process shall be communicated to the PI's for an opportunity to improve their research proposals and get a better chance of approval in later submissions.

3.4.1 Funding Decision and Feedback

All applicants notwithstanding whether their proposals have been approved or not are notified with an explanation of the outcome of their proposals' evaluation. This includes whether the

proposal has been deemed to meet the quality threshold and provides the corresponding comments given by the funding organization and, where applicable, the comments given by the peer reviewers. Note that the comments by the peer reviewers may not necessarily be convergent – divergence in opinion about the merit of a proposal constitute an integral aspect of the "Scientific Method". Furthermore, the funding organization may overrule the position that could be inferred from the comments of the peer reviewers, such as in case the funding body discussion of a proposal reveals a glaring weakness, which had not been identified by the peer reviewers. Successful applicants shall use the feedback to prepare for the subsequent negotiation meeting and/or contractual agreement. Unsuccessful applicants may use the feedback to help them improve the deficiencies with their proposals, and hence consider them in other submissions.

3.4.2 Appeal

To ensure fairness in Ejaad processes, applicants are allowed to appeal a decision made in Ejaad. Ejaad in collaboration with the funding organization will then provide a written explanation of the reasons for opinions or decisions made, and offer the applicants a reasonable opportunity for rebuttal, but reasoned, and written grounds for the post-appeal decisions. An appeal is allowed only in either one of the following two circumstances:

1. Procedural error, which may take place in case of departure from Ejaad's policy regarding conflicts of interest;
2. Factual error, which may happen in case the decision "Rejected" is found to be based on a conclusion that contradicts the information clearly stated in the proposal. This does not include, however, disagreements over the interpretation or analysis of facts.

Under such circumstances, Ejaad shall give the proposal an in-depth review. However, Ejaad will not consider or accept an appeal based on grounds such as the following:

1. Amount of granted funds;
2. Proposed period for research execution;
3. Reasons and specific concerns related to the funding organization

3.4.2.1 Appeal Process

At an initial stage, applicants are invited to discuss their concerns with the Research Area Manager in charge of the research sector in Ejaad. The latter shall attempt to resolve the concerns amicably. In the advent of an unsatisfactory outcome where the applicant still considers the Ejaad process has resulted in a contestable decision, the PI may file an appeal. The appeal process is as follows:

1. A "Letter of Appeal" should be addressed to the Ejaad Director and must support the appellant position and demonstrate that a factual or procedural error has occurred.

2. Ejaad Director shall conduct an internal review of the validity of the grounds for appeal and, based on the published criteria, make a recommendation.
3. If the grounds of an appeal are confirmed, the “Letter of Appeal” will be referred to an Ad-hoc Appeals Review Committee (ARC) set up by Ejaad Director for an impartial assessment and recommendation.
4. The appeal will normally examine all evidence called into question by the appellant.
5. An appeal will only be based on the proposal documentation that was submitted and served as the basis of the Ejaad decision.
6. The appellant is not allowed to include new supporting documents, omitted in their original proposal, as part of his/her “Letter of Appeal”, such as papers published after submitting the proposal.
7. Any changes to the submitted proposal or changes that have taken place subsequently to the submitted proposal will not be considered.
8. Meetings with the ARC will be conducted, where both parties have the right to speak to the issues raised in the documentation distributed. During the meeting the followings may happen:
 - a. The appellant presents the reasons for the appeal to Ejaad and speaks to the issues;
 - b. The ARC is free to ask questions at any time during the oral presentations.
9. The ARC, having heard the oral presentation and reviewed the written and supporting documentation, shall be the sole judge of the facts and shall render a decision, which is fair and just, given the circumstances.
10. The ARC may recommend that the appeal be denied, or it can recommend that the appeal be accepted and the appellant’s research proposal be approved.

The ARC will notify Ejaad Director about the outcome of the review process in writing, who should then communicate the conclusion to the appellant with a copy of the appeal report and the evidence considered. The ARC decision is final.

3.5 Negotiation Meeting

Negotiation meeting is set to finalize the agreement with conditionally approved proposals. This allows successful applicants to respond to comments raised in the proposal evaluation process. Negotiation equally includes a discussion of the proposed budget with the intent of providing the applicant with comfortable, but realistic, funds for the successful accomplishment of the foreseen project. The usual outcome of this meeting is the finalizing of a CTR (cost, time, resources)-based contractual agreement form.

3.6 Agreement and Reporting

As soon as the acceptance decision is made by the IFP for a research proposal, Ejaad sets a negotiation meeting between the IFP and successful applicant, in the presence of the Academic

Focal Point (AFP) and a representative from Ejaad. This aims to finalize the CTR contractual agreement form.

The contractual agreement is a legally binding document which stipulates the rights and obligations of the funding organization, hosting research institution and the PI. The date of signature of contractual agreement is usually considered as the date of commencement of the project. This, however, may change as deemed appropriate for the hosting institution, the PI or the funding organization.

3.6.1 Contractual Agreement

The PI in collaboration with the IFP or any representative assigned by the funding organization shall prepare the contractual agreement for the project on the basis of the proposal and the outcome of the negotiation meeting. The contractual agreement shall involve:

1. Description of the scope of work. This specifies the scientific/technical components of the proposal;
2. A detailed description of the proposed solution;
3. Project budget, start and end dates, cost breakdown, milestones and deliverables;
4. Reporting requirement;

A template of the contractual agreement is provided on editable format, ready for use and can be downloaded from www.ejaad.om. The hosting institution and PI are expected to provide if requested, further information on the project and its envisaged management in view of the guidelines applicable to Ejaad. Funding organization always signs the agreement after having received the duly signed agreement from the PI and his/her hosting institution authority.

3.6.2 Technical Reports

PIs are required to periodically submit technical reports to the funding organization as described and contracted in the agreement. These reports inform the sponsoring body of the progress and achievements of the project. Specific outputs from the project can be requested in the contract and shall be included in the reports. Technical progress reports are to be submitted at specific interim periods of the project. A final report concludes the project. PIs are required to prepare and submit progress and final reports through Ejaad system.

3.6.3 Acknowledgements of Fund/Support Provided

Whenever achievements resulting from Ejaad-funded research are published (such as in journals, conferences, patents, presentations, etc.) the PIs must acknowledge the financial support from funding organization(s) and the in-kind support from Ejaad. This may imply a written acknowledgement and/or the use of logos.

3.7 Financial Management

In the industry challenge template, Ejaad has created a non-compulsory field called “Budget for Challenge” to allow the funding organization to specify the budget allocated for the challenge posted in Ejaad. Generally, no budget caps are imposed on various categories of the budget; however, the research team has to justify the budget requested. The funding organization reviews and assesses the budgetary requirements of each proposal against the significance of the proposed research in order to determine the appropriate amount of funding support.

3.7.1 Salary, Stipend and Scholarship

As a general policy, Ejaad recognizes that salaries of researchers and other personnel associated directly with a project constitute appropriate direct costs and shall be requested in proportion to the effort devoted to the project. Hourly rates of the personnel involved in the research project shall be defined as per the research institution rules and regulations.

3.7.2 Equipment and Facilities

Ownership of facilities and equipment provided under an Ejaad funded project shall vest in the RI. If other collaborating institutions are involved, agreement on time-sharing and access to equipment or facilities must be reached with them before the RI signs the contractual agreement.

3.7.3 Materials and Supplies

Materials and supplies are defined as recurrent items purchased and used specifically for the project such as consumable materials, and disposable instruments.

3.7.4 Administrative Costs

These allocations include items that do not come under any of the cost categories.

3.7.5 Payment Process

Funds are typically paid in several milestones, which are aligned either with research progress or with timeframe, both of which are normally agreed by the relevant parties in the contractual agreement as the Joint Industry Academia Project (JIAP) is being formed.

3.7.6 Budget Adjustments

Ejaad provides flexibility for PIs to transfer and allocate funds across expenditure categories within the research project. In such cases, the PI must provide an explanation and justification for the changes and re-allocations of funds. Ejaad and funding organization must be satisfied that the proposed change is acceptable before the transfer of fund.

3.7.7 Validation of Expenditure and Auditing

Ejaad intends to depend on the RI Auditing Department to validate any financial expenditure related to a research project. Nonetheless, Ejaad and funding organization has all the rights to request validation of expenditure.

3.8 Project Management

3.8.1 Structure of Project Team

Ejaad supports research projects that are carried out by groups of investigators, each under the leadership of a PI. The following guidelines should be followed in project team formation:

1. Principal Investigators (PIs) can be of any nationality and country of residence as long as they are working in the Sultanate of Oman for the duration of a supported research project;
2. The constitution of individual research teams is flexible. Commonly, it involves investigators such as senior researchers, post-doctorate, graduate and PhD students;
3. Non-academic staff may also be involved as project team members, such as technicians, secretarial support staff or consultants. In this respect, the Technical Committee shall carefully evaluate the added scientific value and expertise of each proposed team member to the project; and
4. Depending on the nature of a research project, the project team may also involve members from other research institutions, either locally, regionally or internationally. Participation and funding of researchers not based in Oman is subject to specific appraisal by the Technical Committee, which assesses whether their involvement is properly justified and essential in terms of scientific competence and research capabilities.

3.8.2 Changing or Replacing Principal Investigator

Acknowledging the arising of unforeseen circumstances such as retirement, resignation or death, Ejaad allows for replacing the PI and applies the following guidelines in this respect:

1. Research institution must consult Ejaad and the funding organization when proposing to replace the PI;
2. Research institution shall seek a written “No-objection” letter from the former PI and agreement from the new one;
3. Ejaad expects that the Co-PI takes the lead of the project as stipulated in the contractual agreement; and
4. Research institution may nominate a replacement PI (other than the Co-PI), as long as the replacement meets the eligibility criteria for a PI and has the expertise and experience to lead the research project to a successful conclusion, in accordance with its objectives. Approval of such nomination is subject to funding organization approval.

3.8.3 Changing the Strategy or Project Plan

The PI is expected to carry out the project as described in the research contractual agreement. However, it is possible to adjust the scientific strategy and allocate or re-allocate expenditure (e.g. regarding staff, equipment, and consumables), provided the research performed is still in line with the original scientific or scholarly objectives. In case of significant changes, the Principal Investigator shall notify the Technical Committee and/or the funding organization for negotiations and possibly amend the agreement.

3.8.4 Delay in commencement of project

If an awarded research project does not commence within a period of three months from the specified commencement date without any valid reason and accepted by funding organization, Ejaad may withdraw the offer of the award.

3.8.5 Termination and suspension

Any Ejaad member(s) part of a research project may request to terminate a contractual agreement by submitting a written notice to the other party in one, or more, of the following circumstances:

1. Discovered a breach of any of the obligations arising from Ejaad guidelines or the Terms and Conditions of the contractual agreement and fails to remedy such breach (if remediable) within 30 days of receipt of a notice from the first party requesting such remedy; or
2. Any of the contract parties becomes insolvent or bankrupt or is in the process of a winding up or another process of dissolution unless a voluntary one for the purposes of reorganization; or
3. Funding organization has reasonable cause to believe that, after reasonable notice to the research institution a Final Project Report, which meets the expressed or implied requirements of the research project, will not be produced by the research institution in accordance with the approved budget and/or project proposal and research execution plan.
4. If either Party is prevented from performing any obligation arising from Ejaad guidelines or Terms and Conditions by reason of Force Majeure, then it shall immediately give notice to the other Party, specifying the circumstances that it is believed constitute Force Majeure and estimating the likely duration of such circumstances. The Parties shall be excused further performance of the Project for so long as such circumstances endure; always provided that should such circumstances endure for longer than six months, then either Party may, by notice to the other, terminate the contractual agreement.

If the contractual agreement is terminated; the Research Institution and the Principal Investigator shall take all necessary steps and shall submit all necessary documents as may be specified in the agreement.

3.9 Ethics, Confidentiality and Disclosure

Throughout the entire process from the industry challenge to EOI to proposal stage to project closure, all necessary steps must be taken so that policies pertaining to ethics, intellectual property, security and copyright are respected. The following guidelines address these considerations.

3.9.1 Ethics

To ensure responsible conduct of research supported by Ejaad, all members must be committed to the following principles:

1. Promote awareness of ethical behaviour, guidelines and legislation
2. Ensure that all proposed research conforms to Omani culture, tradition, religious belief and national security regulations and concerns.
3. Adopt methods that are intellectually rigorous, honest, scholarly and scientific, yet appropriate to the research being conducted
4. Follow established practices that are safe, secure and respectful of the rights of other participants
5. Accurately acknowledge other research in full, whether published, in press or under review;

3.9.2 Handling of Personal Information

Ejaad members and any party with which they collaborate formally should only collect personal information when it is necessary for its core functions or activities, and by lawful and fair means.

3.9.3 Safeguarding Proprietary of Information

Ejaad is keen to safeguard research data and information, however, Ejaad – after securing a written permission from all related parties – has the right to use any submitted material (proposals, reports, presentations, papers, etc.) for national benefits. Ejaad and its members should ensure that:

1. Confidential information is only released on a “need-to-know” basis and that full confidentiality is always preserved;
2. The responsible person and all relevant parties must be immediately informed if confidential information has been lost;
3. No discussion of any confidential information is allowed outside official premises;

4. Hard copies of confidential information shall only be made when necessary and kept at a minimum;
5. All parties to the research are made aware of the nature and scope of confidentiality agreements related to the use of research data;
6. Staff members with access to confidential information should not reveal their passwords, in written, oral or any other form, to others at the research institution or outside;
7. High levels of security are established for access to confidential information systems; and
8. For the controlling of personal information records, research institution shall assign a record-keeper, present at its premises, the duty of whom is to ensure that:
 - a. Security safeguards are set that fully protect records against misuse;
 - b. Mechanisms are in place to fully prevent unauthorized use or disclosure of information, especially in circumstances that necessitate giving out records to other persons;
 - c. All information is accurate, relevant, up-to-date and complete and related to the purpose for which the information was collected or is to be used;
 - d. Ejaad will consider any of the actions mentioned below, that are taken without the prior permission of a recognized authority, as unethical, unacceptable and a just cause for disciplinary action within Ejaad regulations:
 - i. Accessing, modifying, tampering with, destroying or jeopardizing the integrity of any stored program or data;
 - ii. Using, modifying, tampering with, damaging or destroying any computer equipment;
 - iii. Removing, defacing or destroying printouts, documents or support material; and
 - iv. Copying, modifying, deleting, disseminating, breaching confidentiality or copyright requirements, or using any part of the information provided or generated by or addressed to the persons involved which may become available to them in whatever form through their use of research institution computer facilities.

3.10 Intellectual Property and Publications

3.10.1 Copyrights

As a general rule, all rights to the copyrightable material are the property of the creator. In this regard, all Ejaad members shall be committed to the following responsibilities:

1. Adhere to all statutory and commercial laws related to copying and dissemination of copyright material;
2. Establish stringent controls and procedures to reduce the risk of exposure to legal action on the allegations of copyright infringement;

3. Outline procedures and responsibilities for the use of third-party copyrighted material;
4. Define clear responsibilities to assist staff to make full legal use of the material at their disposal;
5. Promote understanding and awareness of copyright obligations; and
6. Establish procedures for the imposition of penalties for the breach of copyright requirements.

3.10.2 Dissemination of Research Findings

Ejaad promotes and encourages the dissemination of research findings provided that proprietary data of industrial partners, security and/or commercially sensitive information, and potential valuable results and ideas are protected from unauthorized, unwarranted, or untimely disclosure. In addition, dissemination should not preclude the ability to file for a patent, where the research project leads to a potentially valuable invention. Hence, investigators are fully responsible to attain permission from funding organization with regard to dissemination of research findings.

3.10.3 Intellectual Property Rights

Unless specified otherwise in the contractual agreement, copyrights and Intellectual Property (IP) belong to the research institution. Ejaad and/or the funding organization may, in individual cases, reserve the right to retain ownership of IP and to arrange for it to be exploited for the national benefit – with the involvement of the research institution.