

Universidad Libre Strategic Research Plan: Three Axes for Success

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Introduction

The Universidad Libre, through its National Strategic Research Plan, structures its research efforts into three fundamental axes: Institutional Guidelines, Research Management, and Research Training. In accordance with the Comprehensive Institutional Development Plan (PIDI), the Universidad Libre and its headquarters in Cartagena establish the projects to be executed and the actions to be carried out each year, fulfilling the annual objectives of the academy and the administration under these three axes.

“The approach to teaching and research that characterizes the work of the University in all the sections, seven in total, is based on the relationship between the development of teaching and research (basic and applied), reflected in the undergraduate and graduate training processes, through the permanent drive for sustainable development in the areas of influence where the University is present.” Agreement No. 1 (February 1, 2019)

1. Institutional Guideline: Structure and Regulation for Solid Research

The first axis, the Institutional Guideline, establishes the organizational and regulatory support for research at the Universidad Libre. This axis is key to supporting the approach of teaching with research, providing the necessary bases for each action to be aligned with the institutional mission. It includes:

- National Multicampus Research Structure: The University has an organizational structure, ensuring coherence in the objectives and research methodologies in the different locations.
- Research Organizational Chart: A national organizational chart that allows for a clear distribution of functions and responsibilities, facilitating collaboration between academic and research areas and ensuring efficient use of human resources.
- Regulations and Procedures: Specific regulations that guide the research processes, from design to dissemination of results, ensuring compliance with quality standards and ethical norms.
- Quality in Processes: A quality assurance system to continuously

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evaluate and improve research procedures, maximizing the impact and relevance of projects and their results. This axis ensures that the Universidad Libre has a solid and structured foundation that facilitates the execution of research aligned with its institutional mission and its commitment to sustainable development.

2. Research Management: Impact and Visibility of Scientific Production

The second axis, **Research Management**, is essential to ensure that projects generate a real impact and that the University's scientific production achieves a high level of visibility and recognition. Key aspects of this axis include:

- **Evaluation and Classification of Research Groups** : The Universidad Libre, and in this particular case, its headquarters in Cartagena, stands out in areas such as social sciences and law, occupying important places in national rankings, which demonstrates its leadership and commitment to research excellence.
- **Technological Tools for Research** : The University uses tools such as the **Multicampus Research System (SIMUL)**, which facilitates the centralization of data and improves administrative efficiency. It also uses the **Open Journal System (OJS)** to manage its scientific journals, promoting the effective dissemination of research results.
- **Network of Scientific Journals** : The University participates in a network of scientific journals and maintains indexing standards through systems such as **SIRES**, ensuring that its publications are recognized internationally.
- **Calls and External Funding** : Participation in calls and the search for external funding for research projects is encouraged, thus strengthening research groups and expanding development opportunities for students and teachers.

This axis encourages interaction between students, teachers and the community, through projects that not only generate knowledge, but also have a tangible impact on the social environment.

3. Research Training: Development of Competencies and Research Culture

Finally, the **Research Training axis** focuses on the development of research skills from the first stages of the training process. The Cartagena Campus, in particular, demonstrates a firm commitment to strengthening the research culture through various programs and strategies:

- **Research Assistants and Nurseries** : Research assistants and nurseries are essential components that foster students' interest in scientific

research. These students work hand in hand with research teachers and are linked to the projects that each teacher develops, allowing for meaningful participation.

- **Mobility and Recognition** : The University encourages student exchange and mobility between its campuses, also granting recognition to the research achievements of students and teachers, strengthening the sense of community and belonging.

Additionally, there are key definitions associated with training and research at the University, as mentioned in Agreement No. 1 (February 1, 2019):

- **Training for Research** : It includes the bases and approaches to research, encouraged in the classroom and focused on providing spaces for the understanding and application of concepts, methods, techniques and procedures. Its purpose is to awaken the investigative spirit of students throughout their training process.
- **Formative Research** : It is established from the relationship between teaching and research, as a pedagogical exercise made up of students, research assistants, nurseries, young researchers, professors dedicated to research, as well as research groups and networks. Its objective is to increase research culture and promote new attitudes in areas of science and technology through real practices, allowing the academic community to be an active part of research teams.

Research training at the Universidad Libre extends beyond the teaching of techniques and methodologies. It seeks to promote a true research culture, where each member of the academic community is committed to the creation of useful and relevant knowledge.

It is important to highlight the adaptations made during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the University adjusted its guidelines to ensure the continuity of research projects, adapting methodologies and overcoming the challenges imposed by a constantly changing global context. In this way, the three axes were able to meet their fundamental objectives, ensuring the advancement of research, the development of academic skills and the consolidation of a research culture committed to excellence and social impact.

Conclusion

The National Strategic Plan for Research of the Universidad Libre, with its three fundamental axes: Institutional Guidelines, Research Management and Research Training, establishes a comprehensive model of teaching with research that benefits both students and the academic community in general. Each axis contributes to consolidating a solid and organized structure for the development of research, guaranteeing that the projects have a real impact, where the community is the first to benefit.

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Through this approach, the Free University not only promotes the academic development of its students, but also contributes to the advancement of science and the construction of a more just society, always remaining committed to excellence, sustainability and social responsibility.

References

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