

# Mpala Debt Management Policy

## 1.0 Introduction

Researchers/Students form MRC's largest group of customers and are billed by MRC principally for accommodation and support activities fees. MRC acts in good faith and only bills Researchers and or Students for costs they have incurred.

It is expected that Researchers and or Students shall act in good faith and will pay all sums owed to the MRC. Where a researcher and or student has a significant overdue debt with MRC and little prospect of being able to pay, then it is in the best interest of the researcher and or student, for MRC to discontinue them from accumulating additional debt without addressing the problem.

Where a sponsor (University/Project) is to pay on behalf of a researcher/student, but fails to do so, then the researcher/student will be held personally liable for the debt. The responsibility for acting as an intermediary and ensuring adequate information is provided to both the MRC and the sponsor rests with the researcher/student.

When a refund is due to be made by the MRC, the refund will be made by the same payment method and to the same account as the original amount was received in order to comply with Anti-money laundering guidelines.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all amounts owed by Researchers Students incurred on their behalf by MRC for activities duly authorized by their project staff, researcher and or students. It shall be availed to researchers before the start of their work at MRC.

## 3.0 Objectives

- 3.1 To explain in an open, transparent and accessible way how the MRC will treat Researchers/Students who have outstanding debt owed to the MRC.
- 3.2 To demonstrate what actions Researchers/Students can take to mitigate any steps likely to be taken by the MRC to recover outstanding debts.
- 3.3 To apply a debt policy that is "firm but fair"; that encourages all Researchers/Students to pay in good time, but has the flexibility to recognise and respond appropriately when this is not possible because of a genuine difficulty.

## **4.0 Policy Statements**

### **4.1 Operational**

- 4.1.1 For all accommodation costs at MRC, Researchers and or Students are expected to pay before or on arrival. All other fees MUST be paid on the earliest of the 30<sup>th</sup> Day of the month or before they depart MRC whichever comes earlier.
- 4.1.2 For long term researchers and projects, payments shall be due 30days from the invoice date.
- 4.1.3 The researchers and or students shall indemnify for MRC's debt collection costs incurred in recovering their debt.
- 4.1.4 In exceptional cases, where reasonable grounds for requesting more time to pay can be justified, MRC may grant an extension not exceeding 2 weeks upon receiving a written request through the Finance Department from Researchers and or Students experiencing difficulties. The due date of the invoice will be amended accordingly and the extension shall be communicated in Writing.
- 4.1.5 MRC will be transparent in operating this policy as follows:
- This policy document shall be availed to the researcher and or student before commencement of their work.
  - An email reminder will be sent prior to the due date Researchers/Students
  - After the due date, Individual letters will be sent to the Researchers/Students issuing them with a final deadline which to pay.

### **4.2 Suspension of An Account**

- 4.2.1 Researchers/Students Account shall not be allowed to accrue debt over a period of 3months or a debt over \$5000. Such an account shall be suspended.
- 4.2.2 Researchers/Students owing over \$5,000 will be identified at the end each month and reminder letters sent.
- 4.2.3 The Chief Finance and Operations Manager will be provided with a list of Researchers/Students who have been sent reminders by the Chief Accountant and will become actively involved in the process henceforth.
- 4.2.4 Researchers/Students who do not pay invoices owed to the MRC will have their researcher put on hold and debt will be pursued using all available means including external debt collection agencies.

## **5.0 Debt holds and Recovery**

- 5.1 A debt hold can be placed upon a researcher/student's account so that they cannot access services at MRC.
- 5.2 The hold will be applied in the first instance with respect to any overdue debt 90days old or debt over \$5000.Researchers/Students will have their research reinstated at the MRC when they pay all that is owed.
- 5.3 MRC shall employ alternative means of debt recovery on exhaustion of amicable means.

## **6.0 Deposits and cancellation**

- 6.1 All new researchers and or students will be required to pay a deposit of not less than 50% of the issued Proforma invoice by MRC.
- 6.2 The deposit received will be held on the researchers and or student's account ready to be applied to the invoices for accommodation and related expenses. If a student/researcher pays a deposit and has confirmed booking and does not arrive at Mpala, the deposit will be held in credit to be unutilized in future arrivals.
- 6.3 Cancellation is allowed with reasonable notice period. Cancellation done one month to arrival shall attract a 15% cancellation fee and two weeks to arrival shall attract 30% fee.
- 6.4 Where cancellation is due to events beyond both parties control no cancellation fee shall apply in cases where deposit is retained for future use. Where a refund is requested a 5% cancellation fee shall apply.
- 6.5 No cancellation fee shall be charged where appropriate notice has been given to reschedule dates of arrival and no refund is requested.
- 6.6 In all cases, direct costs incurred shall be recovered before any refunds are made.

## **7.0 Student with overdue debt wishing to return to study**

- 7.1 A student/researcher who has overdue debt owed to the MRC is not permitted to return to study/research on a different course/project before clearing the overdue debt first.

## **8.0 Implementation and Review of Policy**

- 8.1 The ED is the custodian of the policy and take relevant action with respect to Researchers/Students debt recovery.
- 8.2 The Chief Finance Officer will take responsibility to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently to all students/researchers.
- 8.3 This Debt management policy shall be reviewed annually