DARE-RC – Proposal Scoring Tool for Research Studies and Scoping Paper/Evidence Synthesis (Cycle 4)

Research Title:

Principal Investigator'(s) name (s):

Date (Proposal Received):

Technical Proposal Evaluation (70%)						
Section-1: Technical Quality & Relevance						
		Inadequate	**Basic**	**Good**	**Excellent**	**Points**
1	**Project Design (60%)**					**60**
1.1	Relevance to Call, Priority Area & Topic	Weak or no clear fit with Cycle 4 topics or priority areas.	Only loosely connected to listed topics; relevance is asserted but not well demonstrated.	Generally good fit; topic choice is clear, but links to specific call language or provincial priorities could be sharper.	Very clear fit with at least one specified topic; convincingly explains how the proposal addresses the stated problem/priority area; clear Pakistan focus and/or well-justified multi-province design.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	

Note for the reviewer:
For research studies: Check alignment with specific study topics in Annex 1 (e.g. girls' transitions, multigrade teaching, decentralisation, assessment use, etc.).
For scoping/syntheses: Check alignment with Annex 2 topics (CPD, AI, climate resilience, monitoring systems, etc.).

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

1.2	Engagement with Existing Evidence & Contribution	Little or no engagement with existing evidence.	Evidence is mentioned but is descriptive or thin; gaps and contribution remain vague.	Some engagement with literature; main gaps and contribution are present but not very sharp.	Concise, analytical overview of relevant Pakistan and global evidence; clearly identifies gaps; shows how the proposed work will *add* to or synthesise that evidence.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	

Note for the reviewer:
For research studies: Look for a clear link to prior studies (including DARE-RC portfolio where relevant).
For scoping/syntheses: Pay particular attention to the proposed approach to searching, appraising and synthesising evidence (even if briefly described).

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

1.3	Clarity of Problem, Questions & Outputs	Problem and questions are unclear; outputs seem disconnected from questions.	Issues are broadly described but questions are too many, too vague or not well aligned with outputs.	Problem and questions are mostly clear; some minor overlap or over-ambition; outputs broadly aligned.	Problem, objectives and 2–5 focused questions are clearly stated and realistic for 6–8 (or 4–6) months; outputs (report, policy brief, article, etc.) are clearly linked to these questions.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

1.4	Design & Methods--Appropriate to a Short Study / Scoping Paper	Design is not suitable (e.g. relies on extensive new primary data collection or complex experiments that are unrealistic for 4–8 months); analysis plan is weak or missing.	Methods are generic or under-specified; unclear how they answer the questions within the time/budget; still feasible with modification.	Methods broadly appropriate but could be better justified or slightly simplified; some minor mismatch with available time or data.	Methods are clearly appropriate to a short study – e.g. secondary analysis, targeted qualitative work, or mixed methods with *limited* primary data as indicated in the Call; or a well-structured scoping/synthesis protocol. The design shows a clear internal logic between the questions, data sources, and analysis.	10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	

Notes for the reviewers:
For research studies:
– Is the design realistic with no extensive primary data collection (as required by the Call)?
– Are proposed analyses (quantitative and/or qualitative) feasible with available datasets and field time?
For scoping/syntheses:
– Is there a sensible strategy for locating, screening and synthesising evidence?
– Are any proposed interviews/FGDs clearly "targeted" and light-touch?

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

1.5	Feasibility, Timeline & Risk Management	Timelines not credible for a small grant; little or no risk analysis.	Timelines compressed, vague, or unrealistic; risks mentioned superficially.	Workplan is broadly realistic with minor over/under-estimates; risks mentioned but not fully elaborated.	Clear, simple workplan matching the 4–8 month duration; key milestones (inception, data collection/synthesis, drafts, final outputs) are realistic; risks (access to data, NOC, political events, etc.) are identified with plausible mitigation measures.		5
		0	1-2	3-4	5		

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

1.6	Policy relevance and possible uptake *(Overarching criteria: Policy relevance & demand; potential to fill critical evidence gaps)*	Weak policy link; mainly academic interest.	Policy relevance is claimed but not clearly demonstrated; little clarity on who will use the findings.	Policy relevance is evident but more generic; users are identified but pathways for use are somewhat general.	Very clear link to specific policy questions, reforms or decisions (federal and/or provincial); identifies concrete "users" (departments, units, programmes) and shows how findings will be translated into policy-friendly products (briefs, dialogues, visuals). Strong case that the work fills an important gap for these users.		10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10		

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

1.7	Ethics, Safeguarding & Inclusion	Ethics/safeguarding not described.	Ethics acknowledged but generic or copy-pasted; little connection to the proposed context.	Basic ethics points covered with some mention of safeguarding and inclusion.	Concise ethics statement covering informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and specific safeguarding commitments (esp. for vulnerable groups), consistent with DARE-RC requirements; notes inclusion of marginalised groups where relevant (e.g. girls, remote communities, people with disabilities).	5
		0	1-2	3-4	5	

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

Total points obtained in Section 1 (Out of 60)	

Overall Comments (Section 1: Project Design)

Overall Evaluation (Recommended/ Recommended with Reservations/ Not Recommended):
_____

Evaluator's Name: _____   Evaluator's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Section 2: Team & Institutional Capacity (To be assessed by the Research Team)					
	Inadequate	**Basic**	**Good**	**Excellent**	**Points**

2	**Prior Research Experience (20%)**						20
2.1	Prior research experience in education, especially in the Cycle 4 research topics or themes under the DARE-RC Research Agenda.	Weak track record; little evidence of experience in education research.	Limited direct experience in the topic or methods; some related work but not clearly demonstrated.	Solid general education research experience, with some thematic or methodological relevance to the proposal.	Team collectively shows strong experience in education / social science research in Pakistan and in the specific theme or methods proposed (e.g. assessment data, decentralisation, CPD, gender, climate resilience, evidence synthesis); at least some recent, relevant outputs (peer-reviewed papers, reports, or briefs).		10
		0-2	3-5	6-8	9-10		
Reviewer's Comments (if any):							

2.2	Team Composition, Roles & Inclusion	Roles are very unclear; no indication of inclusion or collaboration.	Team structure partly defined but with unclear roles or limited inclusion; little mention of collaboration.	Roles and responsibilities mostly clear; some inclusion or collaboration elements; minor gaps.	Clear roles and time commitments; balanced mix of senior and early-career researchers; evidence of collaboration across institutions (including public sector universities where possible); attention to gender and other forms of inclusion in the core and field teams, in line with Call ambitions.		5
		0	1.2	3-4	5		

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

2.3	Ability to Deliver Within Timeframe	No demonstrable track record of completing similar projects.	Limited evidence of timely delivery of similar work.	Some prior experience with comparable projects; timelines broadly realistic.	Proposal and CVs show clear evidence of delivering similar-scale studies or scoping reviews within tight timelines; references or prior projects suggest reliability.		5
		0	1-2	3-4	5		

Reviewer's Comments (if any):

	Total points obtained in Section 2 (Out of 20)						

Overall Comments (Section 2: Prior Research Experience)

Overall Evaluation (Recommended/ Recommended with Reservations/ Not Recommended):

_____

Evaluator's Name: _____   **Evaluator's Signature:** _____

Date: _____

Section 3: Budget & Value for Money (To be assessed by the Fund Management Team and Research Managers))					
		Inadequate	Basic	Good	Excellent	Points
3	**Budget & Value for Money (20%)**					20
3.1	Cost Realism & Efficiency	Clearly inflated or not aligned with the level of effort / call guidance.	Some inflated or unclear cost lines; still fixable.	Budget broadly realistic; some items could be trimmed, but no major concern.	Budget sits clearly within the indicative range for the relevant type (PKR 18–25m for short research studies; PKR 8–11m for scoping/syntheses) and is well-justified; unit costs are reasonable; overheads ≤10%; limited or no "nice-to-have" items.	10
		1-2	3-5	6-8	9-10	
Reviewer's Comments (if any):						
3.2	Value for money	No consideration of VfM.	Limited attention to VfM; some inefficiencies.	Implicit VfM in the structure; explanation could be sharper.	Clear VfM narrative; direct link between costs and expected outputs, policy impact and learning; efficient use of travel/fieldwork; appropriate staffing levels.	5

		0	1-2	3-4	5	
	Reviewer's Comments (if any):					
3.2	Compliance with Budget Guidance	Does not follow basic template or guidance.	Several inconsistencies with guidance.	Minor deviations or clarifications needed; overall compliant.	Budget format, categories and justification follow DARE-RC financial guidelines closely (including tax, caps on overheads, etc.).	5
		0	1-2	3-4	5	
	Reviewer's Comments (if any):					
	Total points obtained in Section 3 (Out of 20)					

Overall Comments (Section 3: Management Structure and Key Personnel)

Overall Evaluation (Recommended/ Recommended with Reservations/ Not Recommended):

Evaluator's Name: _____ Evaluator's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Section 5: Final endorsement by the Approval Committee

Research Director's (RD) Comments:

RD's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Programme Director's (PD) Comments:

PD's Signature: _____ Date: _____