

Call for Proposals

WTO Chairs Programme - Nepal

Kathmandu University School of Management | Research Grants 2026



Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) invites proposals from academicians, students (Undergraduate, Graduate, MPhil, and PhD), independent researchers, and practitioners for funded research projects under the WTO Chairs Programme - Nepal. As Nepal stands at a historic juncture, poised to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in November 2026, this round of funding places particular emphasis on research that informs evidence-based trade policy and supports Nepal's sustainable and resilient transition into the post-LDC era.

Please submit proposals through the link provided below **on or before April 15, 2026**, under one of the research themes listed below.

Priority Research Themes for 2026

- **Nepal's LDC Graduation: Trade Policy Readiness and Smooth Transition** Nepal's preparedness for LDC graduation in November 2026, including the implications of preference erosion, the implementation of transition strategies, post-graduation WTO obligations, and the policy reforms required to sustain export competitiveness and development gains.
- **Competitiveness, Export Diversification, and Value Chains** Nepal's trade competitiveness across priority sectors identified in NTIS 2023 - including IT/BPO, hydropower, high-value agriculture, niche organic products, and handicrafts - with emphasis on value addition, global value chain integration, and reducing structural trade deficits.
- **Climate Change, Green Economy, and Sustainable Trade** Intersection of climate action, green innovation, and trade policy in Nepal and the South Asian region, including carbon border adjustments, eco-labelling and green standards as trade barriers, climate-resilient supply chains, and the trade implications of Nepal's green energy transition.
- **Digital Transformation, E-Commerce, and the Digital Trade Agenda** AI-driven trade decisions, Natural Language Processing (NLP), Leveraging AI to optimize supply chain and workflows in logistics, Analysis of Nepal's participation in the WTO Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on E-Commerce, digital trade facilitation, fintech and digital payments, and the role of digital transformation in enhancing MSME access to international markets.
- **Regional Geopolitics and Trade Integration** Geopolitical Issues, Technology as a Geopolitical Frontier; Role of Multi-Lateral Agencies in Trade Promotion and Facilitation; Examination of Nepal's regional trade architecture, including SAFTA, BIMSTEC, and bilateral trade relations; transit trade issues.

- **Trade in Services: Tourism, Hydropower, Remittances, and Education** Youth and digital service trade, Nepal's services trade capacity in high-potential sectors, including regenerative and sustainable tourism, cross-border energy services (hydropower exports), the trade dimensions of remittances and labour mobility, education as an export service, and GATS commitments post-LDC graduation.
- **Gender, Social Inclusion, and Equity in Trade** Gender-responsive trade policies, women's participation in trade and entrepreneurship, inclusive design in trade facilitation for marginalized communities, and the distributional effects of LDC graduation and trade liberalization on vulnerable groups in Nepal.
- **Investment Facilitation, FDI, and Private Sector Development** Nepal's investment climate, FDI regulatory reforms, the Investment Facilitation for Development Agreement (IFDA), SEZ performance, and strategies to mobilize private-sector investment post-graduation, in the context of declining concessional finance and shifting development cooperation modalities.
- **Food Security, Agricultural Trade, and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures** Intersection of food security, trade policy, and SPS/TBT measures affecting Nepal's agricultural exports and imports, including compliance capacity, organic product trade, agri-food value chains, and the trade dimensions of Nepal's high-value agriculture strategy under NTIS 2023.
- **WTO Multilateral Governance, Trade Policy Review, and MC14 Priorities** Nepal's engagement with the multilateral trading system in light of the November 2025 WTO Trade Policy Review, MC14 preparations, plurilateral initiatives (JSI on E-Commerce, Government Procurement Agreement), and institutional capacity needs for active WTO participation as a graduating LDC.

Proposal Structure

The proposal should include the following chapters:

1. Title

2. Background of the area of research

3. Problem statement - including the phenomenon under study, research questions, and objectives

4. Rationale - articulating the policy and academic relevance of the proposed inquiry

5. Brief literature review and conceptual or theoretical framework (qualitative or quantitative)

6. Planned methodology - including inquiry tools and sources of empirical data

7. Expected findings and their contribution to trade policy and/or academic knowledge

8. References

9. Work plan of the research project

10. Budget

Scheme Details

- **Eligibility:** This scheme is open to academicians, students (Undergraduate, Graduate, MPhil, and PhD), independent researchers, and practitioners.
- **Duration:** 9 months (15 December, 2026), including proposal development and final report submission.
- **Funding:** Proposals should be prepared with a budget of up to NRs. 1,50,000 (subject to deduction of Tax and KUSOM contribution).

Proposal Submission Deadline: April 15, 2026

Scan here to submit
your proposal



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