

# Managing Research Programs (Mainly in Mathematics)

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## Introduction

Let me first thank Dr. A. D .R. Choudary, 1 who kindly invited me to visit Lahore and suggested a talk on this topic. I spent 35 years in a large, successful research department, and for a substantial period was in charge of all its postgraduate (PG) matters. That taught me a great deal about the factors that contribute to research success, and I believe it may be of value to set out systematically some of the things I learnt.

One point I would make from the outset is that there are two levels of management, namely university and departmental. The former is responsible for the basic infrastructures supporting research, to be mentioned later. Mainly I want to stay at the departmental level. Although I write from the perspective of a mathematician, much of what I have to say is relevant to general academic research. You may find some points “obvious”. However I have reached the age when I find that it is often worthwhile stating the obvious. I am aware of all too many cases where research suffered because the “obvious” was not done.

Let me remind you of a basic reality. In the global economy, prosperity depends on scientific and technological strength, built on the foundation of mathematics. That is the reason why mathematics is of prime importance in any developed country. The governments of the world’s most successful economies all agree that *mathematics is a crucial key to the future*. Moreover, the level of mathematics necessary to support cutting edge science and technology is steadily rising. That is the reason high-level scholarship and research are of increasing importance. It is not easy to manage this activity. A good starting point is to learn from those with proven track records.