

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

GENERAL RESEARCH FUND 2024/25

Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (GRF2)

Table of Contents

Preamble: How to Use this document and further advice.....	1
SECTION 1 – SCHEME OVERVIEW	2
1. Purpose and Objectives of the Scheme.....	2
2. Types of Academic Research Eligible for this Scheme	2
3. Applicant Eligibility to Apply	2
4. Funding Thresholds and Duration	3
5. Scheme Timetable	4
6. Assessment Process for Applications.....	4
<i>Overview.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Assessment criteria.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Making changes to the proposal following submission.....</i>	<i>5</i>
7. Submission Processes	5
SECTION 2 – COMPLETING THE APPLICATION MATERIALS	7
PART I: SUMMARY OF THE APPLICATION.....	7
1. Particulars of the Project.....	7
2. Research Areas and Project Team	8
PART II: DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL.....	12
3. Project Objectives	12
4. Research Project Statement	12
5. Pathways to Impact Statement.....	13
6. References	13
7. Output Dissemination Plan	13
8. Declaration of Time Commitments, Grant Record and Related Research Work of Investigator(s)	13
PART III: PROJECT FUNDING and RESOURCES.....	16
9. Cost and Justification.....	16
(A) One-line Vote Items	16
(i) Supporting Staff	16

(ii) Equipment.....	17
(iii) Outsourcing of Research Work Outside Hong Kong	18
(iv) General Expenses	18
(v) Conference Expenses.....	19
(B) Earmarked Items	19
(vi) Relief Teacher	19
(vii) Research Experience for Undergraduate Students.....	20
(viii) High-performance Computing Services	21
(ix) Research-related Software Licence / Dataset	21
(C) Deduction Items	21
(D) Academic Research Related to Public Policy Developments.....	21
10. Existing Facilities and Major Equipment available for this Research Project	21
11. Funds Secured or to be Secured.....	22
PART IV: ETHICS AND OTHER APPROVALS.....	23
12. Research Ethics / Safety Approval	23
13. Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records	23
14. Project Data	23
PART V: ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS	23
<i>Appendix 1: Education Plan</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Appendix 2: Technology Transfer Plan (Optional)</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Appendix 3: Letters of Collaboration.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Appendix 4: Clinical Fellowships Form and / or Ethics and Safety Approval Letters .</i>	<i>24</i>
PART VI: UNDERTAKING OF THE PI.....	24
PART VII: UNIVERSITY’S ENDORSEMENT AND DECLARATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY APPROVAL	25
UNIVERSITY’S ENDORSEMENT	25
1. Staff eligibility requirement for GRF	25
UNIVERSITY’S COMMITMENTS.....	25
2. Support to PI and students.....	25
3. Research Ethics / Safety Approval and Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records.....	25
Annex A.....	1
Annex B.....	1
Annex C.....	1

Preamble: How to Use this document and further advice

All applicants and their universities should read this Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (Guidance Notes) carefully before completing and submitting an application to the scheme. The Research Grants Council (RGC) may stop further processing your application if your application is found to be not in compliance with any of the requirements as set out in the Guidance Notes.

The Guidance Notes is in two parts: SECTION 1 summarises the key information about the scheme while SECTION 2 is structured to mirror the application form sections and provide section-by-section guidance on completion of the application.

Enquiries about the contents of this Guidance Notes and other related matters about the GRF funding exercise (such as appeals and complaints) should be directed to the Research Offices of your university. Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the application form may contact the Research Offices of their own universities.

The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in applications submitted to the RGC are contained in **Annex A**.

The RGC is fully committed to the principle of honesty, integrity and fair play in the conduct of its business. To uphold public trust and protect public interest, it is important for all applicants to note and observe the “RGC Code of Conduct” and “Extracts from the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance” at https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/guidelines/code/code_of_conduct.pdf

SECTION 1 – SCHEME OVERVIEW

1. Purpose and Objectives of the Scheme

The General Research Fund (GRF) aims to supplement universities' own research support to researchers who have achieved or have the potential to achieve excellence.

2. Types of Academic Research Eligible for this Scheme

The following notes indicate the types of research eligible for this scheme:

- Basic research - research for the sake of advancing the frontiers of knowledge regardless of whether it would provide immediate benefit to mankind.
- Applied research - efforts directed at meeting certain functional requirements which involve the application of theories to specific areas or for specific purpose, and / or enhance man's existence in the short to medium term.
- Research which is in the Creative Arts can be considered under this scheme only if the research elements of the methods, problems and research process are clearly explained. Applicants should approach other funding authorities such as the Hong Kong Arts Development Council if their proposals have no research elements.

3. Applicant Eligibility to Apply

Academic staff members of an UGC-funded university whose conditions of employment meet all the following requirements are eligible for application of GRF as Principal Investigator (PI):

- i. they have a full-time¹ appointment in the university proper²;
- ii. they are in Staff Grades from 'A' to 'I'³ (i.e. from 'Professor' to 'Assistant Lecturer');
- iii. they are primarily engaged in and spend at least 80% of their time in degree or higher degree work⁴ at the university proper; and
- iv. their salary is wholly funded⁵ by the university proper.

Academic staff who are engaged in non-degree programmes which are still funded by the UGC may also apply as the PI. Eligible staff in this category must be wholly funded from the General Funds of the institution(s) concerned. This arrangement would continue until such time when the relevant programmes are no longer funded by the UGC. Cases of an exceptional nature

¹ Excluding part-time staff and staff holding honorary appointments.

² Excluding schools / arms of continuing education and professional training and other analogous outfits.

³ Excluding polytechnic staff grades.

⁴ A Project Investigator who is / will be seconded to work full-time or part-time at the two Innovation and Technology (I&T) clusters (Health@InnoHK and AIR@InnoHK) at the Hong Kong Science Park; or to conduct research in a university or a research institute / body / agency in the Mainland / overseas jurisdiction, is still considered eligible to apply for the GRF.

⁵ Excluding staff members who are receiving income from paid appointments outside the university proper or who are supported by external research grants.

(including circumstances not covered by the above rules) will be considered by the RGC on a case-by-case basis. The university should seek the RGC's special approval for such cases before submitting the application.

No applicant should be a PI on more than one application to the scheme.

The following categories of staff members are subject to the following additional requirements beyond criteria (i) to (iv) above:

- (a) A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the University on or before the submission deadline of this funding exercise and that their appointments would take effect on or before 16 April 2024;
- (b) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being offered in June 2024 and for at least the first year of the project's planned duration; or
- (c) A visiting scholar should have a full-time employment at the university proper covering at least one year or the duration of the project whichever is the longer.

4. Funding Thresholds and Duration

Thresholds

Applicants are invited to make reference to the average and range of funded amounts under the respective subject panels on the RGC website. The lower threshold limits for applications are \$150,000 for projects in the fields of Biology & Medicine, Engineering and Physical Sciences, and \$100,000 for projects in the fields of Business Studies and Humanities & Social Sciences.

The upper limit for proposals in the field of Biology & Medicine and Engineering is \$1,600,000. Proposals costing more than \$1,600,000 will still be considered exceptionally but they must be supported by strong justifications. This budget cap is applicable to Biology & Medicine and Engineering Panels only.

Duration

Projects to be funded from the GRF should normally last for no more than three years. An exception are applications for longer-term research, the objective of which is to cater for projects with a research objective(s) that can only be achieved in a time span of four to five years. Proposals for longer-term grants are considered alongside other GRF applications by the relevant subject panels using the same review process, and evaluated according to the same set of criteria. For proposals of equal quality, preference will be given to proposals with higher impact, large scope and longer duration (three years and longer) over those with incremental advances and shorter duration.

Since funding for longer-term grants are likely to be larger in size, the RGC places particular emphasis on the following two aspects:

- i. the applicant must have the time and capacity to undertake a longer-term project. In this regard, the number of all on-going projects of which an applicant is either a PI or a Co-investigator will be carefully taken into account; and

- ii. the applicant must have a proven track record in delivering research outputs in the previously RGC-funded projects.

The RGC may on the basis of merits adjust the proposed length of research and vary the project budgets. In such cases, the applicants have the discretion to decline a grant if they do not consider it operationally or financially viable to carry out the projects.

PIs should note that they are only allowed to hold one long-term grant at any one time. If a PI already has a longer-term grant, he / she will be eligible to apply for another longer-term grant by the GRF deadline in November provided that he / she submits the completion report of his / her existing longer-term project by 15 April in the following year.

The longer-term grant is released in two instalments. The apportioning of the grant between the two instalments is decided by the RGC. Release of the second instalment is subject to satisfactory progress of the project. As a matter of rule, no project extension will be allowed for longer term grants save for cases with strong justification.

In the case of unsatisfactory progress or other serious problems identified by the RGC, the RGC has the absolute discretion to withhold or postpone the release of the second instalment of funding. Where required, the RGC may even terminate the project and request return of the unspent balance.

5. Scheme Timetable

The application deadline for the GRF 2024/25 exercise is 3 November 2023. Applicants shall submit their applications via the RGC electronic system. Late applications will NOT be considered.

6. Assessment Process for Applications

Overview

Applications for research project grants are assessed by the relevant subject panel assisted by a number of external experts from all over the world. The RGC currently has a database of more than 12,000 experts whose services may be called upon to assess applications for research project grants.

The RGC's main objective is to fund as many worthy projects as possible across a broad front within the funds available. Nevertheless, projects of exceptional merit will be funded more fully than other projects.

Assessment criteria

The following criteria should be used in considering competitive bids:

A	<p>academic quality / merit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● research and scholarly merit of the proposal; ● qualifications and track record of the (principal) investigator(s); ● originality; ● feasibility within the time-scale of the proposal
---	--

B	institutional commitment
C	contribution to academic / professional development (where applicable);
D	potential for social, cultural or economic application
E	availability of, and potential for, non-RGC funding

Academic quality / merit is the overriding criterion in evaluating research projects when others are accorded equal weight. In considering grant applications, the RGC will also take cognizance of alternative sources of funding available because some subject area will attract more private funding than others.

Feedback reports from expert reviewers will be provided to applicants via their universities. These comments will be anonymised so individual reviewers cannot be identified.

Making changes to the proposal following submission

If necessary, applicants can submit a brief update of the proposal through the Electronic System to the UGC Secretariat on or before 15 April 2024. This should only indicate material changes to the bid, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the PIs, addition / removal of Co-Investigators, alternative funding obtained, declarations of similar / related proposals / projects, investigator(s)'s CVs, grant records, etc. It should be emphasized that such update should be confined to the above-said changes, and applicants should not use the opportunity to revise their proposals substantially. Upon request, the information update in hard copy should be appended to the proposals when submit to the UGC Secretariat.

If an update is provided for ethics / safety approval for an application, the respective Research Office should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before 15 April 2024. Submission of letters on ethics / safety approval is however not required at this stage, but such letters, if necessary, may need to be provided upon RGC's request.

If an update is provided for approval for access to Government / official / private data and records for an application, the respective Research Office should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before 15 April 2024. Evidence of approval should also be submitted at this stage.

If an update is provided on any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, the PI / Co-I(s) should submit the relevant update to the RGC on or before 15 April 2024.

7. Submission Processes

When proposals are submitted through the Electronic System, a project reference number will be automatically generated for each of the proposals for identification purposes. The project reference number should be used and quoted in all future correspondence. While an application could be made to a particular panel, the RGC shall have the discretion to decide on the panel responsible for the final assessment of each application.

Upon request, hard copies of each proposal may need to be forwarded to the UGC Secretariat in May 2024. Universities will be notified of the requirement in April 2024.

It is important that applicants should comply with the page / word limits specified in various sections of the application form. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have exceeded the allowable page / word limits. Applicants shall not include links to external websites in their applications which contain extra information about the proposed project in the research proposal.

SECTION 2 – COMPLETING THE APPLICATION MATERIALS

Format and font

In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, applicants must complete the application form and all **pdf documents** in the following standard RGC format:

- Font : Times New Roman
- Font Size : 12 point
- Margin : 2.5 cm all round
- Spacing : Single-line spacing

Failure to comply with the format requirements may result in the removal of your application from processing. **Do not exceed the page or word limits for any section.**

All sections of the application forms should be completed. Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert “N.A.” Please ensure that you provide sufficient information for the RGC and its reviewers to undertake a full assessment of your proposal. Incomplete applications or applications with inconsistent / inaccurate information may be rejected by the RGC as uncompetitive.

Applicants are not allowed to mention anything not related to the research proposal per se in the application form with a view to communicating to the RGC / Panel Members / reviewers to influencing the latter in assessing their applications or that the latter should give a certain rating if they intend to support the projects. Should such act be discovered, the applications concerned will be disqualified.

For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in a language other than English, applicants are required to provide an English version on the Project Abstract and Part II (3) – (7) in pdf file format.

PART I: SUMMARY OF THE APPLICATION

1. Particulars of the Project

(a) Provide the name and academic affiliation of the PI (Principal Investigator).

(b) Indicate if the PI is within two years of full-time paid appointment to their first substantive position equivalent to staff grades ‘A’ (Professor) to ‘I’ (Assistant Lecturer) as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) (see **Annex B**) in any university (local or non-local) at the time of the submission deadline of this funding exercise. If yes, the proposal should be printed in green-colour paper for easy identification upon request.

(New appointees within first three years of his / her full-time academic job as a substantiation track / tenure track Assistant Professor or career equivalent level are encouraged to apply under the Early Career Scheme (ECS). Applicants may choose to submit their research proposals under the ECS or the GRF but not both in each funding cycle. For details, please refer to the Application Form for the ECS.)

(c) Provide the number of hours per week the PI will spend on the research project.

(d) Provide the Title of Project: ensure that this is informative, clear and concise.

(e) State the Project Duration in months.

(f) Provide the Total Amount Requested. This should match the calculations in Part III Section 9 on finances.

(g) Nature of Application: tick the box to indicate whether this application is New, Resubmission or Continuation.

“New” refers to the application on research topic which the PI and / or Co-I(s) applies / apply for RGC funds for the first time. “Re-submission” refers to the application on research topic which the PI and / or Co-I(s) have previously submitted or largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to but not supported by the UGC / RGC or other funding agencies. “Continuation” refers to the application continuing the work previously funded by the RGC.

(h) (i) If this is a Resubmission or a Continuation application, provide details of the previous application or award.

It is the responsibility of the PI to declare clearly and honestly whether his / her proposal is a re-submission. The RGC reserves the right to discount the rating of an application for its failure to acknowledge the fact that it is a re-submission of a previous application.

(h) (ii) In the case of a Resubmission, please complete a statement (maximum of 500 words) explaining how any previous review / assessment recommendations have been addressed in the current submission. This should be a constructive response to previous reviewers’ comments. It should be scholarly in tone. You should focus on key issues that have been most significantly changed or improved as a result of previous feedback. Re-submitted proposals will be treated as fresh applications in peer-review and handled in an identical manner to other new applications. Subject panels will take into account the PIs’ responses to the reviewers’ comments but the panels are not required to invite the same group of External Reviewers for assessment of the new application.

2. Research Areas and Project Team

(a) Identify the Primary Field and Code and, if relevant, Secondary Field and Code: the fields and codes listings can be accessed at **Annex C**. The Primary Field and Code being selected will determine the subject area of the assessment panel to which the proposal is submitted. For example, if a proposal's Primary Field and Code is "Water (2106)", it should come under the subject area of “Civil Engineering, Surveying, Building & Construction (E1)” of the Engineering Panel. To facilitate the appointment of the right experts to evaluate the proposals, a PI should select a specific primary field area as far as possible. If a PI selects a non-specific primary field area, i.e. Others, he / she must select a specific secondary field area close to the field area of the proposal. To indicate the inter-disciplinary nature of a proposal, you may select a secondary field area / code from an assessment panel which is different from that of the primary field area / code. Inter-disciplinary proposals will then be evaluated jointly by experts from different panels. The RGC reserves the authority to decide whether an application is inter-disciplinary or not.

(b) Provide maximum of five keywords related to the research proposal. You have a maximum of 30 characters per keyword.

(c) Type a short Project Abstract of a maximum of 400 words in the text box or upload one A4 page of abstract in standard RGC format if there are special symbols which the system cannot support. The abstract should be comprehensible to a non-specialist audience. It should summarise the key research challenges and your approach, including what the research will deliver in terms of new knowledge and / or impact. If a proposal is funded, the Project Abstract will be mounted on the RGC website for public's information. The applicant will be approached for a Chinese version of the Project Abstract for public access shortly after the announcement of the funding results, or an English version if the original Project Abstract is presented in Chinese.

(d) (i) PIs and Co-Is details: Complete the table to provide the details of the PI and all Co-Is involved in this project in the table: this must include affiliations, ORCID iDs and any panel or committee memberships held with the UGC or RGC at the date of application deadline.

To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of PIs, the PI should enter the name as shown on his / her Hong Kong Identity Card / passport (where applicable) and use the standardized format of names as agreed with respective universities when submitting all RGC grant applications:

	PI Surname	PI Other Name*
e.g.	Chan	Peter Tai-wai
e.g.	Zhong	Yaping
e.g.	Robinson	Philip Gary

* first / given name, then Chinese name in English syllables (hyphenated) or middle name, if any; initials should be avoided.

Note: Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the PI. Other applicants, if any, will be regarded as Co-investigators (Co-I). Each Co-I should have a clear, distinct and material role, which should be outlined in the Project Team and Plan for Collaboration attachment (see below). A large number of Co-Is should be avoided. Save in very exceptional circumstances, the RGC will not entertain requests for the addition of co-investigators to a project after the funding award. Once the application is submitted, a change of PI during the period of processing the application will not be approved.

(d) (ii) CV(s) and Publication list for PI and all Co-Is: For the PI and all Co-Is you must include a CV and publication list. Each CV and publication list should be limited to either two sides of A4 in pdf (standard RGC format) or a maximum of 800 words for direct inputting in the text box and in the following format.

CV

- (i) Name:
- (ii) Academic qualifications:
- (iii) Previous academic positions held (with dates):
- (iv) Present academic position (state if applicant is a visiting academic from overseas):
- (v) Previous relevant research work:

Publication page

Section A - Five most representative publications in the last five years

Section B - Five representative publications beyond the recent five-year period with the latest publication entered first.

The author list of the publications should be presented in full and cited exactly as written in the original publication. In particular, the applicant should indicate clearly his / her position especially in the long author list, say author 13 out of 40 for facilitating panel's consideration. Failure to comply with the above requirements may lead to disqualification of the concerned application.

Other information including research-related prizes and awards, brief description of experience in consultancies, service as a referee in evaluating other grant applications, patents, PhD theses supervised, etc should also be included.

(d) (iii) Project Team and Plan for Collaboration. Please input 800 words maximum. This should make clear the roles of individual members of the project team, including how they contribute to the overall delivery of the research programme. Commitments about roles, responsibilities and contribution of individual members stated should be reflected in the letter(s) of collaboration provided for each collaborating partner (as appropriate).

The PI should confirm that the Co-I(s) listed in the proposal have explicitly agreed to serve in the project team and a copy of the proposal has been provided to each of the Co-Is. Letter(s) of collaboration from the Co-I(s) should be attached at Part V. Further documentary proof on the collaboration should be provided upon request of the RGC / Secretariat.

If the research involves collaboration with other research team(s) or university(ies), letter(s) of collaboration should be attached to Part V.

Panel specific guidance: Under the Biology & Medicine Panel, proposals of clinical, translational and epidemiologic studies should show evidence that members of the study team have collective experience in the relevant design, conduct and data analysis issues pertaining to the proposed study. Inclusion of an epidemiologist and / or a biostatistician in the study team is encouraged.

(e) Special template attachments: please indicate whether the application involves special funding requests (i.e. Clinical Research Fellowship or Individual Research (research time)).

For the Clinical Research Fellowship, please refer to Enclosures I and II and include the attachment in Appendix 4.

For Individual Research Time, please include:

(i) period(s) of the proposed research time and the expected research activities in Part II (4); and

(ii) only expenses arising directly from the proposed research in Part III, examples include: airfare, accommodation and travel per diem of the PI in overseas, hiring of temporary staff (such as local guides, porters or assistants) for on-site work; and conference attendance. Expenses covered by recurrent block grant expenditure should not be included.

(Before applying for RGC's support, the PI should approach his / her respective university to seek an agreement-in-principle on the re-arrangement of his / her teaching schedule to allow for the proposed time-off. The support for individual research is open for applications in the fields of Humanities & Social Sciences and Business Studies only. The GRF applications for individual research will be considered alongside with other GRF applications by the same subject panel at the same time, and evaluated according to the same criteria. There is no preference for one type of proposal over the other: the principal consideration being the quality of the proposals.. Holders of the GRF for individual research are not eligible to hold another GRF for individual research at the same time, although holders of this support may hold other RGC or non-RGC grants concurrently. Support for individual research enables the PI to take research time to carry out research in an individual and independent manner, in contrast to the conduct of research through supervision of research staff (e.g., Research Assistants). The PI may collaborate with others so long as individual ownership of a distinctive piece of work can be demonstrated. The research time is to be achieved through re-arrangements of teaching schedule, utilization of summer vacation or entitled sabbatical. Within a typical project of 24 to 36 months, the minimum period for research time is four consecutive months, and the maximum period is 12 months in total. All (overseas) trip(s) must be completed within the project duration. Applicants should apply for time-off from their respective universities that suit their schedules and needs of the project. During the teaching relief the PI is expected to work full-time on the proposed research. He / She should not accept any teaching assignment or undertake any other major research activity. The time-off is intended mainly for field work, site visits, interviews, library or archival research, etc. The time-off is not primarily for solitary contemplation or extensive writing, as these activities can take place outside the period of time-off during the project duration. Upon receipt of this support, the PI should ensure that teaching duties are rearranged. Failing that the RGC will withdraw the award.)

PART II: DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

3. Project Objectives

Please provide a maximum of 800 words outlining in bullet-point form the Project Objectives. These should include a summary of:

- reasons for undertaking the project
- the key issues and / or problems being addressed – these should be described and the project's engagement with solutions to the problems explained
- possible outcomes of the research project in terms of new knowledge and / or practical application.

4. Research Project Statement

This is to be a maximum of 10 A4 sides in Research Project Statement and should include five elements:

- i. Research context - This should set out details of the research proposal in relation to the research field(s) involved. You should make clear the need for the research you are proposing and how it relates to existing research in the field.
- ii. Research questions - This element should state clearly the key problems or questions you are seeking to address in the research project. Why are these important issues to address? How do they relate to the research context you have outlined? What new knowledge and insight will be generated by your project in relation to these issues and why is that important?
- iii. Research Methods - This element should make clear the approach you propose to take to the research: Outline the uniqueness and justification of the proposed approach including how will you explore the research questions you have outlined and by what kinds of method and approach i.e. data gathering, experiment, observation, analysis and critique. The relevant research principles and techniques on which the problem solution depends should also be presented. You should make clear why these methods respond effectively to the questions you are seeking to explore.
(a maximum of seven A4 sides in total for (i) to (iii))

Across these three elements, you should be clear on whether work has been / is being carried out by you and / or others on a related subject and outline previous and alternative approaches to the problem and their deficiencies, listing the key references to relevant research by you and others. For continuation of previous projects, the progress made and results achieved during the previous years should be clearly summarized. The summary should be sufficiently detailed to allow an evaluation of the worthiness of the project for continuation of support. For new projects, the reasons for investigation and the relevant findings should be clearly demonstrated.

- iv. Project timetable / Gantt chart (a maximum of one A4 side in Research Project Statement) - A research timeline and a Gantt chart showing the research activities should be given. Where appropriate, experiments, tests and required facilities should be described. Applicants for longer-term grant (i.e. more than three years) should justify why the proposed research cannot be completed within the normal span of 36 months. All Biology & Medicine proposals should include appropriate sample size and

power estimates. For proposals applying funding for clinical trial, a protocol should be submitted in a separate pdf file as an addendum.

- v. Attached diagrams, photos, charts, and tables etc, if any (a maximum of two A4 non-text sides in Research Project Statement)

5. Pathways to Impact Statement

Please provide a maximum of two A4 sides as an attachment.

For the purpose of GRF, impact shares the same definition in Research Assessment Exercise 2020, i.e. the demonstrable contributions, beneficial effects, valuable changes or advantages that research brings to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life. It is concerned with the impact of the research beyond academia. The Pathways to Impact Statement should address the following questions:

- Who are the potential beneficiaries of the proposed research in the short (1-3 years), medium (4-10 years) and long term (over 10 years)?
- How will the potential beneficiaries benefit? What will be the objective demonstrable / measurable benefits beyond academia?
- What will be done during and / or after the project to increase the likelihood of achieving the identified benefits and reaching the identified beneficiaries?

6. References

Please provide up to three A4 sides maximum as an attachment. All references should be provided in full and include all authors. Generally accepted citation formats (e.g. American Psychological Association (APA) format) should be used.

7. Output Dissemination Plan

Please provide information on output dissemination plan in the table below:

Target timing of dissemination (quarter/year)	Output type (Journal / Conference / Other (e.g. book chapter))	Name of target journal, conference or other dissemination means

8. Declaration of Time Commitments, Grant Record and Related Research Work of Investigator(s)

(A) Please provide (i) the number of on-going individual research projects¹ being held by the PI in any capacity (e.g. PI, Co-I, Collaborator, etc.); and (ii) the number of on-going

¹ Examples include research projects funded under the General Research Fund (GRF), Early Career Scheme (ECS), etc. Individual research projects funded from sources other than UGC / RGC should also be included.

collaborative research projects² being held by the PI in any capacity (e.g. PC, Co-PI, Co-I, Collaborator, etc.). Research projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) should be included, except those funded under the joint research schemes and the fellowship schemes administered by the RGC. A project is regarded as “on-going” if the completion report of the project has not been submitted / will not be submitted by the application deadline of the current GRF exercise.

If the number declared in (i) exceeds three **or** the number declared in (ii) exceeds two, please provide (iii) overall amount of time spent on research by the PI in percentage terms; and (iv) justifications on how the PI would be able to take up this additional research project if funded while maintaining the research quality.

(B) Please provide details in the table of ANY completed, ongoing or applied for research projects by the PI or Co-Is.

It is the responsibility of applicants (both PI and Co-I(s)) to ensure that no duplicate funding from sources including the RGC will be sought / has been sought for the same / substantially similar research project. Failure to declare similar / related projects / proposals (irrespective of whether submitted to / funded by UGC / RGC and not limited to those in the past five years) in this section may result in disqualification of the application and debarring from applying for future UGC / RGC grants. PIs / Co-I(s) are required to declare any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal.

The RGC will make the final decision on whether proposals / projects / research work are similar. It is therefore advisable for the PI or the Co-I(s) to declare related research work even when there is uncertainty. Declaration of related proposals / projects / research work does not necessarily mean that the proposals concerned will be adversely affected. The RGC may still fund the proposals concerned if the PI / Co-I is able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects / research work for separate funding.

(a) For the PI, please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals undertaken by the PI (in capacity as PI / PC / Co-I / Co-PI) including (i) completed projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) in the past five years; (ii) on-going projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); and (iii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC). Please also provide the objectives for each of the completed / on-going / pending projects / proposals under (i), (ii) and (iii) as well as the updated number of hours per week spent on each of the on-going projects (except the involvement as Co-I in GRF / Joint Research Schemes projects) under (ii).

The PI should declare (iv) any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC and not limited to the past five years), including but not limited to data collection, preliminary research, working papers, publications (such as journal papers, conference papers and books, etc.), presentations, media interviews and other

² Examples include research projects funded under the Areas of Excellence Scheme (AoE), Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS), Collaborative Research Fund (CRF) and Research Impact Fund (RIF). Collaborative research projects funded from sources other than UGC / RGC should also be included.

submitted proposals, etc. The PI is also required to provide the details (such as the title of the projects and / or papers / publications, or a brief description of the preliminary research work, etc.) whether or not such work was part of a funded project; and provide clarifications that distinguish that related research work from the work requested to be funded through this proposal. Any researcher who fails to disclose any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal will be subject to disciplinary action.

- (b) For each Co-I, please provide details on (i) the on-going research projects funded from all sources and (ii) pending proposal / project which are undertaken by each Co-I (in the capacity as PI / PC).

The Co-I should declare (iii) any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC and not limited to the past five years), including but not limited to data collection, preliminary research, working papers, publications (such as journal papers, conference papers and books, etc.), presentations, media interviews and other submitted proposals, etc. The Co-I is required to provide the details (such as the title of the projects and / or papers / publications, or a brief description of the preliminary research work, etc.) whether or not such work was part of a funded project; and provide clarifications that distinguish that related research work from the work requested to be funded through this proposal. Any researcher who fails to disclose any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal will be subject to disciplinary action.

PART III: PROJECT FUNDING and RESOURCES

The RGC may not process your application if the proposed budget does not comply with the requirements as set out below. The RGC also reserves the right to use sanctions on any university which fails to screen out non-compliant applications. While RGC may fully or partially fund the approved projects, universities are expected to provide necessary infrastructural and overhead supports such as normal academic equipment, consumables, postage, fax, stationery, reference books and overseas telephone charges to funded projects.

General Advice

A detailed budget for the project duration must be given. Applications for a longer-term grant may include a budget for the 4th or 5th year as appropriate. Co-Is are not regarded as project staff and their salaries must not be paid from RGC's project fund. Academic staff remunerated by any UGC-funded universities in Hong Kong must not be paid with honorarium or other form of payments.

The on-costs related to research projects funded by the RGC will be disbursed to the universities for their disposal. The UGC Secretariat will liaise with the Research Offices of the universities on the calculation and disbursement details separately. PIs are not required to include the calculation of on-costs in the application forms. They have to include the project costs only.

The estimated costs should not include any 'hidden' costs covered by recurrent block grant expenditure, such as the normal salaries of teaching staff who spend a portion of their time on research, cost of utilities, stationery, etc. They should include only expenditure which would not otherwise be separately incurred. Examples of these are: salaries of Research Assistants specifically employed for this project; purchase of equipment necessary for the investigation but not available in the university(ies). In cases where a particular Research Assistant is employed for several projects, his / her salary should be apportioned accordingly.

A "General Expenses" item is provided as a category for costs which cannot be included in any of the other items.

Detailed justification should be provided for each item or the RGC will not consider the request.

Unless otherwise stated, all costs are to be provided in Hong Kong dollars.

9. Cost and Justification

(A) One-line Vote Items

Estimated cost and resource implications:

Provide a total number per year for the costs of the project. In the following subsections you will itemise those costs.

(i) Supporting Staff

Please state the number, rank, cost and duties of supporting staff involved and the justification. The RGC normally supports research support staff at the Research Assistant (RA) level.

Additional justification is required if staff above the RA level are requested. The grant assumes an indicative rate which is currently at \$ 348,000 per annum for RA and \$ 558,000 per annum for senior RA (SRA). These indicative rates are only meant for reference. The indicative rates will be reviewed before the Council decides the supporting level for the applications. The total staff costs supported will then depend on the indicative rates or the rates proposed by the applicants concerned, whichever is lower. In the case of applications for funding for Post-doctoral Fellows, the CV of the post-doc using the CV format under Part I Section 2(d)(ii) should be attached if available.

Panel specific guidance: for applicants under the Biology & Medicine Panel, the Panel normally supports one full-time equivalent (fte) RA only. If more than one fte RA and / or staff above the RA level are requested, strong and detailed justification should be provided.

(ii) Equipment

RGC funds must not be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPod, iPad, MP3 Players, digital cameras and PDAs except with sound justification as approved by the RGC. In addition, the RGC will not provide funding for the purchase or use of standard equipment such as desktop PCs, servers, laptop computers, printers and scanners known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided in the universities concerned. Universities may be required by the RGC to confirm the availability of university's resources prior to their acceptance of an award. This is what the RGC means by "university's commitment".

For equipment, the following points should be addressed:

- Is the equipment essential to the project?
- Has the department / university already provided such equipment?
- Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities and what is the possibility of sharing?

Provide information in supporting the estimated cost of equipment e.g. quotes from suppliers. Items costing over \$200,000 and without supporting quotations will NOT be considered. Up to two A4 pages can be attached, if necessary.

For purchase of equipment at or over \$2.5 million, the following supplementary information is required:

- Has the university already been provided with similar equipment? If yes, please explain the need for the purchase.
- Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities? If yes, please provide the following information regarding such equipment in other universities as far as possible -
 - brand / model details and the year of purchase of the equipment
 - the number of hours of its utilization and percentage of utilization (say per month or per year as appropriate);
 - the estimated number of hours (say per month or per year as appropriate) available for use by other universities per year;
 - whether and how it can perform more / less functions and capabilities than the equipment under application;

- whether there is a practice of shared use of the equipment with other universities currently and in the past two years; and
 - any other reasons that preclude the shared use of the equipment with other universities.
- Level of use: please provide the estimated numbers of staff members and / or students expected to use the equipment under application and the estimated number of hours per annum of utilization.
 - Will the equipment be available for use by universities other than the collaborating universities under the application? If yes, please state the extent of shared use by other universities such as the number of hours available for sharing per week.

(iii) Outsourcing of Research Work Outside Hong Kong

Research grants awarded by the RGC should primarily be used in undertaking research work in Hong Kong by the PIs and their teams in order to train and groom research talents in Hong Kong. It will be legitimate for the PIs to sub-contract out a small part of the research work (regardless of geographic locations) only if:

- The proposed activity is a necessary and justified part of the research and is outlined in the proposal for approval;
- The PIs should have identified and possessed a high level of research expertise in their teams when they submit research applications to the RGC. The activity to be sub-contracted out, for instance, data collection work, should not be the main intellectual focus of the research project;
- The persons / organizations providing the sub-contracting services should be at arm's length with the PIs or their serving universities (for instance, employees, friends, relatives, subsidiary companies *etc.* should be avoided) and the procurement should be done in accordance with the university's procedures and guidelines; and
- The PIs or their team members should be involved in monitoring the sub-contracting services or the supervision of the subcontracting services.

For subcontracting services or research work to be conducted outside Hong Kong, the PIs have to justify in their proposals to the Panels for approval. The corresponding RGC Panels will evaluate the merits and justification of the case according to the conditions specified above. For services / work over \$200,000, price quotations must be provided.

Applicants should provide detailed justification of sample sizes and costs for surveys conducted outside Hong Kong.

(iv) General Expenses

Outsourcing services other than those specified in (iii) above should be included under general expenses. For services / purchase over \$200,000, price quotations must be provided.

Applicants should provide detailed justification of sample sizes and costs for surveys conducted in Hong Kong.

(v) Conference Expenses

The RGC encourages researchers to present their work internationally and to exchange information with others in their particular research areas. A provision of up to \$20,000 per year, irrespective of the number of investigators involved in the project, is normally allowed for each funded project.

(B) Earmarked Items

(vi) Relief Teacher

Applicants under all subject panels may apply for funding support for the employment of relief teachers. Please state the rank of the relief teacher, the months and costs involved. The RGC agrees in principle to provide, in cases where there is genuine need, funding for relief teachers so as to enable the PI to allocate sufficient time for research. The duration of employment of relief teachers should normally range from six to a maximum of twelve months for a typical 24 to 36-month project. Upon receipt of this grant, the PI should ensure that teaching duties are covered by a relief teacher during the time-off approved by the universities. Failing that, the RGC will withdraw the award. Relief teachers engaged for this purpose are meant to relieve the PIs of their day-to-day teaching loads and administrative burden related to teaching work. Such funding will be provided only exceptionally and upon detailed and sound justification. It is not necessary to find a relief teacher with equivalent salary, status and experience as the PI concerned. The relief teacher is also not supposed to take up non-teaching related duties, such as purely administrative work, of the PI. In this connection, the universities are requested to confirm that the salaries for the relief teachers proposed by the PIs do not exceed the salary of Staff Grade 'G' (i.e. Lecturer (U)) of the universities concerned. If the applicant or the university intends to employ a relief teacher with salary higher than that for 'Lecturer (U)', strong and detailed justification must be provided for consideration by the RGC. If a relief teacher is required, the CV of the teacher in the standard format under Part I Section 2(d)(ii) should be attached, if available, for consideration by the RGC. Universities could recruit visiting faculty members to take up the teaching duties and top-up the higher rate using their own funds.

Please also state the current average teaching load (total number of classroom hours per academic year). Universities are requested to confirm that the PI's declared teaching load has been verified. The cost of relief teachers should be calculated as follows:

Per-course rate of relief teacher x Number of courses to be relieved

Under the existing policy, each applicant can hold at most one UGC / RGC grant with an element of relief teacher (save for Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme (HSSPFS)). To this end, holders of grant for employment of relief teacher under UGC / RGC funding schemes are considered eligible to apply for grant for relief teachers under this scheme by the deadline in November if and only if he / she will submit the completion report of his / her existing project (except HSSPFS) on or before 15 April in the following year. The concerned university is requested to confirm the applicant's declaration and where appropriate, undertake to follow up with the applicant on the withdrawal of such budget item in the application in writing to the Secretariat by 15 April in the following year.

Panel specific guidance: Applicants under the Humanities & Social Sciences Panel should note for the relief support, universities will be required to confirm their full support for the PIs of disciplines under the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel to seek teaching relief for a duration proposed by the PI and their agreement to release the PIs upon the RGC's approval. However, if the PIs also wish to employ research assistants in addition to relief support, they need to provide relevant justification in the proposals. The grant assumes an indicative rate which is currently at \$70,000 per course for relief teacher under the Humanities & Social Sciences Panel. The indicative rate is only meant for reference and will be reviewed before the Council decides the supporting level for the applications. This funding arrangement is aimed at addressing the special needs of humanities and social sciences projects which may require relief support in terms of freeing up the Principal Investigators' time for research and writing.

During the research time, PIs may conduct research and writing. They should work full-time on the proposed research and should not accept any teaching assignment (invited seminars and public lectures excluded) or undertake other major duties. The research may be performed in or out of Hong Kong as justified by the nature and scope of the research (e.g. location of archives or subject populations).

(vii) Research Experience for Undergraduate Students

With a view to providing research experience for undergraduate students, the RGC has put in place a total of \$2 million annually within the General Research Fund (GRF) budget for the provision of monthly allowance to undergraduate students to support their participation in GRF research projects; and to allow PIs to include the provision of a monthly allowance of up to \$2,500 to an undergraduate student helper for a maximum period of ten months for each GRF application.

Universities have also agreed to provide same amount of allowance to the students as the RGC on a matching basis so that more students can benefit from this funding arrangement.

To apply for the allowance for undergraduate students, PIs should include the following information under Justification:

- the projects' objectives and activities;
- the appropriateness of the research projects for undergraduate students involvement;
- the form and nature of each prospective students' involvement in the research projects;
- the process and criteria for selecting the students; and
- the intended impact.

Monitoring of the undergraduate students' participation in the research projects is the joint responsibility of the PIs and the related universities. The results of the undergraduate students' participation into the research projects must be also included into the progress report and completion report of the projects.

If the demand exceeds the funding allowances available, the evaluation criteria for the requests will be subject to the same criteria as GRF applications, with academic merit being the primary consideration.

(viii) High-performance Computing Services

A provision of up to \$100,000 will be allowed for the subscription of high-performance computing services for each funded project. Price quotation should be provided. Requests without quotations may not be considered.

(ix) Research-related Software Licence / Dataset

For requests for purchase / subscription of database(s) / dataset(s), price quotations should be provided. Requests without quotations may not be considered. The university should not use the RGC Funds to purchase standard software licences / dataset.

Please confirm whether or not the requested (b) equipment, (d) high-performance computing services and (e) research-related software licence / dataset is available in the university. If yes, please explain why such equipment, high-performance computing services and software licence / dataset cannot be used by the applicant(s).

(C) Deduction Items

(xi) & (xii) Please refer to items (vii) Research Experience for Undergraduate Students and item 11 Funds secured or to be secured.

(D) Academic Research Related to Public Policy Developments

(xiv) Percentage of the total cost of the proposal related to public policy developments

For proposals involving academic research related to public policy developments, please state the percentage of the requested funding to be deployed in handling research work related to public policy developments. In considering applications with policy implications on public policy developments in Hong Kong, the RGC will apply the same assessment criteria adopted under but an additional criterion ‘relevance to the needs of Hong Kong’ will also be considered. To set up a linkage between research projects with a public policy element with the appropriate policy bureaux so that they could be considered for possible implementation, any funded projects with a public policy element would be informed to the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office (CSO) for perusal after announcement of the funding results. This would help formulate innovative policy response that could effectively address societal challenges and is supported. If an applicant does not wish to have his / her project information released to CSO, he / she should inform the RGC separately when submitting research proposal.

10. Existing Facilities and Major Equipment available for this Research Project

Please provide a summary – maximum of 400 words – on any existing facilities and equipment available for this research project.

11. Funds Secured or to be Secured

Other sources of funds can include private donations, awards or grants from other organizations, contract research funds from commercial enterprises, or special allocations made by the university from the block grant or the indicated grant for equipment, etc. It should be noted that the amount secured from other sources will be deducted from the total cost of the project in Part III Section 9(a)(C)(xii) of GRF1.

The RGC has the sole discretion in deciding the final funding. Even if the proposal is fully funded as requested, the RGC funds must not be spent on items that are prohibited unless it is explicitly allowed by the RGC.

PART IV: ETHICS AND OTHER APPROVALS

12. Research Ethics / Safety Approval

It is the responsibility of the university and the PI to ensure that the research proposal is carefully reviewed for its compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Ethics clearance should be sought for research involving artefacts, living animals and / or human subjects including social sciences research involving human subjects (e.g. potential physical or psychological harms, discomfort or stress to human participants that a research project might generate, subjects' privacy etc.). The primary responsibility for seeking the relevant approval and ethics clearance rests with the PI. The PI's university is required to complete Part VI to confirm the details on ethics and safety provided in the application are accurate and any approvals have been given / is being sought. For research involving clinical trials, PIs are allowed to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement.

13. Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records

It is the responsibility of the university and the PI to ensure that approval has been sought for access to Government / official / private data and records if the related data / records are critical to the research proposal. The primary responsibility of seeking the relevant approval rests with the PI. The PI's university is required to complete Part VI to confirm the details provided are accurate and relevant approvals have been given / are being sought.

For both (12) and (13) above with the exception of research involving clinical trials, applications should not be submitted unless the approval of the appropriate agency(ies) has / have been or is / are being sought. The RGC will regard the applications as being withdrawn if no confirmation of approval is provided to the RGC by 15 April 2024.

If the university / PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / Panel eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

14. Project Data

Please complete this part about data arising from the project and relevant access.

PART V: ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS

Applications will be disqualified if the proposals have abused the purpose of the "Additional Attachments" in this part. Applicants should not make use of this part to supplement the contents of other sections.

Appendix 1: Education Plan

Please attach a one side A4 statement outlining the educational activities related to the research programme. This should cover the main benefits to education and learning derived from the project's activities.

Appendix 2: Technology Transfer Plan (Optional)

Applicants are invited to submit a Technology Transfer Plan. Any successfully funded projects with technology transfer plans submitted will be passed to the Innovation and Technology Commission, who will keep in view these projects for possible Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) support in the future. The technology transfer plan will not be assessed by the RGC for the purpose of funding decisions. The Technology Transfer Plan should be a maximum of one side of A4 and cover:

- (a) Activities to be undertaken to:
 - disseminate the R&D deliverables;
 - realise the application of the R&D deliverables in the public sector, i.e. the R&D deliverables being used in government departments, public bodies, trade associations, charitable organisations, etc.; and / or
 - market the R&D deliverables in the commercial world, e.g. target markets and customers.
- (b) Potential industry partners for technology transfer / manufacturing. If possible, please provide information in relation to the future positioning of the product / technology in the market.
- (c) Associated / complementary technology development projects which may synergise with this project for technology transfer. In this case, please give some brief information of such project(s).
- (d) Future plans to apply for ITF to support the applied research component of the proposed project.

Appendix 3: Letters of Collaboration

Letters of collaboration with other research team(s) or university(ies) should be attached. Where these relate to the collaborative contribution of any Co-Investigators in the proposal, the specific contribution (including time spent, role and responsibilities within the project) needs to be stated. This needs to align with statements made in Part I Section 2(d)(iii) of GRF1 .

Appendix 4: Clinical Fellowships Form and / or Ethics and Safety Approval Letters

PART VI: UNDERTAKING OF THE PI

It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that the research activity(ies) / expenditure(s) of the project if funded will be carefully monitored for its / their compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards.

PART VII: UNIVERSITY'S ENDORSEMENT AND DECLARATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY APPROVAL

[To be completed by the appropriate authority of the PI's university]

UNIVERSITY'S ENDORSEMENT

1. Staff eligibility requirement for GRF

The university should confirm that it has evaluated and given support to the application before submission to the RGC. The university is also required to confirm that (i) a PI fully meets the criteria for the GRF grant, including the eligibility rules of Individual Research and Longer-term Research; (ii) the salary for the relief teacher proposed by the PI not exceeding the salary of Staff Grade 'G'; (iii) the existing teaching load is verified; and (iv) the applicant will have the number of hours per week as declared in Part I Section 1(c) to supervise the proposed project without prejudice to his / her existing commitment in other research work, teaching and administrative duties.

The university is also required to report to the RGC immediately if a PI subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant and recommend to the RGC for approval a suitable new PI, if any, to take over / conclude the commenced project.

UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENTS

2. Support to PI and students

The university should commit the provision of a monthly allowance of \$1,250 to the undergraduate student helper up to a maximum period of ten months if this proposal is funded.

The university is required to verify and confirm whether the GRF application is in line with its role, and that adequate supervision, research facilities and training provisions are in place to meet the need of RPg students so employed under the research grant if the application is supported by the RGC. Nevertheless, it should be also made clear that the primary duty of the PI of the RGC grant is to complete the project according to plan and that the training of RPg students and / or undergraduate students should not be used to justify any delay of project completion nor unsatisfactory project performance.

For items (e) to (h), please see the notes for Section 9 in Part III.

3. Research Ethics / Safety Approval and Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records

- (a) The university should confirm that the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has / have been or is / are being obtained in respect of projects involving artefacts, safety hazards or the use of living animal or human subjects, including those in social sciences research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human subjects in a research project, subjects' privacy, etc.). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the universities to ascertain if they involve human subjects. For applications involving clinical trials, PIs are allowed

to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement. For other non-clinical applications involving human subjects, the universities must give approval / exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by 15 April 2024 as is the case with other ethics / safety approval. If the university is unable to confirm by 15 April 2024 that the required approval has been obtained, the RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.

- (b) The university should confirm that the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has / have been or is / are being obtained in respect of access to data / records critical to the proposed research. If the university is unable to confirm by 15 April 2024 that the required approval has been obtained, the RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.

For (a) and (b) above, if the university / PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / Panel eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

Part VI should be completed and submitted by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible person(s) in the university.

UGC Secretariat
August 2023

Handling of Information and Personal Data
Contained in RGC Research Funding Application

Purpose of Collection of Information and Personal Data

1. Information and personal data contained in your research grant application are collected for the following purposes:
 - (a) determination of your eligibility, as a staff member of a UGC-funded university, to apply for a competitive grant from the Research Grants Council (RGC);
 - (b) assessment of the merits of the research proposal which you have submitted for funding support;
 - (c) assisting the RGC subject panels in identifying external reviewers to assess your research proposal;
 - (d) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by the RGC / UGC in relation to the use of public funds;
 - (e) sharing of data with other government departments / research funding agencies for the avoidance of duplicate funding; and
 - (f) for successful projects, such data will be used for project monitoring, promotion, publicity and may also be published on the RGC website.

Handling of your information and personal data

2. Your research proposal including your personal data (e.g. CVs) will be handled with care by the RGC. Staff of the UGC Secretariat, members of the RGC and RGC panels, local and non-local reviewers, and other parties who may be involved in the processes described in Paragraph 1 above will be allowed access to the data on a need-to-know basis but they will be placed under a duty of confidentiality to the RGC. Information so collected by the RGC will not be used for any other purposes. If you want to exclude any individuals from access to your research proposal, you should inform the RGC separately when you submit your research proposal. The RGC does not accept research proposals that are classified “confidential” by the PIs. It also reserves the right to stop processing or reject any applications if the applicants’ requests render it impossible for the applications to be adequately peer-reviewed.

3. When the RGC obtains external assessments on your research proposal, external reviewers will be made aware of the existence of a Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance in Hong Kong, and be forewarned that all written comments about the applicant and research proposal are liable to be released to the applicant concerned upon request. External reviewers will also be advised of the RGC policy on providing feedback to grant applicants described in paragraph 4 below.

4. Applicants should note the following:

- (a) all proposals will have undergone a very rigorous peer-review process which involves external assessments and the relevant RGC panels / committees which are made up of experts from the local and international academic / professional community;
- (b) grants are allocated on a competitive basis and each year is a different exercise (the success rate is based on the general quality of the proposals as assessed by the relevant RGC panels / committees, and the availability of funds, in that particular year);
- (c) the RGC is gradually raising the quality threshold, meaning that only the top and the best quality proposals will be “funded”; and
- (d) comments from all external reviewers on each proposal (except for conference grants / travel grants / fellowship applications) will be provided anonymously to the applicants concerned through their universities.

Physical retention of applications

5. Applications that are funded by the RGC will be retained at the UGC Secretariat for periodic review of progress and final assessment of the research investigation and outcome, with the assistance of external reviewers where appropriate.

Right of Access to Personal Data

6. Notwithstanding the arrangement described above, nothing in this note will affect your legal right to request access to personal data held by the RGC about you or your research proposal and to update or correct such data. Nevertheless, the RGC reserves the right to charge a reasonable fee for the processing of any such request(s) in accordance with the prevailing Government regulations.

Further Information

7. All requests for access to your personal data or correction of your personal data or for information regarding policies and practices and kinds of personal data held by the RGC should be made in writing, by post or by fax, addressed as follows:

Assistant Secretary General (Research)1
Research Grants Council
7/F Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong

Fax: 2845 1183

* * * * *

Staff Grades, Modes and Funding Sources

Academic Grades

Academic, Senior

- A. Professor
- B. Reader
- C. Senior Lecturer (U)
- D. Principal Lecturer (P)

Academic, Junior

- F. Senior Lecturer (P)
- G. Lecturer (U)
- H. Lecturer (P)
- I. Assistant Lecturer

Academic Supporting Staff

- J. Instructor
- K. Demonstrator/Tutor/Teacher Assistant
- L. Others, including language assistant, fieldwork supervisor etc.

Technical Research Staff (Staff who spend essentially all their time on research)

- M. Senior Technical Research Staff (“leaders”, usually Post Doctoral)
- N. Junior Technical Research Staff (“followers”, usually Graduate)

Non-Academic Grades

Non-academic, Senior

- O. Admin, Senior
- Q. Technical, Senior

Non-academic, Junior

- P. Admin, Junior (including secretarial, clerical)
- R. Technical, Junior
- S. Others, including “Mod 1”

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Biology & Medicine Research Proposals**

Biological Sciences

(Subject Area: M1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Behaviour and Psychology	1101
Biochemistry	1102
Cell Biology	1103
Developmental Biology	1104
Ecology	1105
Environmental Research	1106
Food Science	1107
Gene Regulation	1108
Genomic Biology	1109
Growth & Development	1110
Marine Biology	1111
Microbiology	1112
Molecular Biology	1113
Morphology and Anatomy	1114
Physiology	1115
Signal Transduction	1116
Structural Biology	1117
Traditional Chinese Medicine (basic)	1119
Ageing	1120
Biodiversity and Systematics	1121
Bioinformatics, Systems and Synthetic Biology	1122
Biological Imaging	1123
Brain Pain Learning and Memory	1124
Comparative Endocrinology	1125
Comparative Immunology	1126
Fish Biology	1127
Genetics	1128
Neuroscience	1129
Plant Sciences/ Plant Biology	1130
Stem Cell Biology	1131
Virology	1132
Others (please specify:)	1199

Medicine, Dentistry & Health
(Subject Area: M2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Allergy/Immunology	1201
Anaesthesia	1202
Blood/Hematology	1203
Cancer	1204
Cardiovascular Research	1205
Clinical Trials	1206
Connective Tissues	1207
Dentistry	1208
Diabetes/Metabolism	1209
Endocrinology	1210
Epidemiology	1211
Gastroenterology/Hepatobiliary	1212
Genetic Disease	1213
Geriatrics/Gerontology	1214
Health Services	1215
Hearing	1216
Imaging	1217
Infection/Parasitology	1218
Neonatology	1219
Nephrology/Urology	1220
Nursing	1222
Nutrition	1223
Orthopaedics/Traumatology	1224
Paediatrics	1225
Pathology	1226
Pharmacology/Toxicology	1227
Population Health	1228
Psychosocial & Behavioural Research	1229
Reproduction	1231
Respiration	1232
Rheumatology	1233
Surgical Research	1234
Transplantation	1235
Vision	1236
Chinese Medicine (clinical)	1237
Proteomics	1238
Regenerative Medicine	1239
Molecular Diagnostics	1240

Medicine, Dentistry & Health (Cont'd)
(Subject Area: M2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Biomedical Engineering	1241
Biomaterials	1242
Clinical Microbiology	1243
Clinical Virology	1244
Disease Model Development	1245
Drug Discovery and Delivery	1246
Drug Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics	1247
Genomic Medicine	1248
Genomics	1249
Human Genetics/Clinical Genetics	1250
Neurobiology and Neuromedicine	1251
Personalized Medicine	1252
Rehabilitative and Physical Medicine	1254
Stem Cell Therapy	1256
Others (please specify:)	1299

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Engineering Research Proposals**

Civil Engineering, Surveying, Building & Construction
(Subject Area: E1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Building & Construction	2101
Environmental	2102
Geotechnical	2103
Structure	2104
Surveying	2105
Water	2106
Transportation	2107
Urban Development	2108
Others (please specify:)	2199

Computing Science & Information Technology
(Subject Area: E2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Computer Science Fundamentals	2202
Computing Hardware	2203
Network	2205
Software	2206
Speech & Language	2207
Vision	2208
Bioinformatics	2209
Visualization & Graphics	2210
Information Analytics	2211
Data Mining	2212
Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning	2213
Database and data science	2214
Others (please specify:)	2299

Electrical & Electronic Engineering

(Subject Area: E3)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Communication	2301
Electronics	2302
Photonics	2303
Signal & Image Processing	2305
Bioelectronics	2306
Power Electronics	2307
Power System	2308
Microwave and Terahertz Engineering	2309
Others (please specify:)	2399

Mechanical, Production & Industrial Engineering

(Subject Area: E4)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Design	2401
Engineering Management	2402
Fluid	2403
Marine Engineering	2404
Materials	2405
Mechanics & Dynamics	2406
Operations Research	2407
Production & Manufacturing	2408
Robotics & Automation	2409
Textile	2410
Thermal	2411
Biomechanics	2412
Fuel Engineering	2413
Others (please specify:)	2499

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Physical Sciences Research Proposals**

Chemical Engineering

(Subject Area: P1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Chemical Engineering	3101
Biophysics	3102
Energy	3103
Environmental Sciences	3104
Biochemical Engineering	3105
Food Science and Technology	3106
Others (please specify:)	3199

Physical Sciences

(Subject Area: P2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Chemical Sciences	3201
Earth Sciences	3202
Materials Sciences	3204
Physics	3205
Planetary Sciences	3206
Physical Geography	3207
Scattering Methods	3208
Nanomaterials	3209
Nanocomposites	3210
Mass Spectrometry	3211
Environmental Studies and Science	3212
Others (please specify:)	3299

Mathematics

(Subject Area: P3)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Applied Mathematics	3301
Pure Mathematics	3302
Probability & Statistics	3303
Mathematical Finance and Insurance	3304
Others (please specify:)	3399

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Humanities and Social Sciences Research Proposals**

Psychology and Linguistics

(Subject Area: H1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Psychology	4104
Linguistics and Languages	4108
Psycholinguistics	4109
Cognitive Neuroscience of Language	4110
Language Development, Second Language Acquisition, Audiology	4123
Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis	4124
Criminology	4125
Others – relating to Psychology and Linguistics (please specify:)	4196

Social and Behavioural Sciences

(Subject Area: H2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Anthropology	4101
Public Administration & Political Science	4105
Sociology	4106
Architecture	4401
Law	4402
Nursing	4408
Public Health	4409
Social Work	4410
Social Services/Management	4411
Urban Studies and Planning	4412
Visual Design (including advertising, graphic, visual communication, digital media)	4414
Product Design (including fashion. industrial, product)	4415
Environmental Design (including interior design, space design)	4416

Social and Behavioural Sciences (Cont'd)

(Subject Area: H2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Archaeology	4417
Human Geography	4418
Social Policy	4419
Others – relating to Social and Behavioural Sciences (please specify:)	4195

Humanities and Arts

(Subject Area: H3)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Media and Communication	4151
Literature	4204
Creative Arts: Dance	4207
Creative Arts: Dramatic Arts	4208
Creative Arts: Music	4209
Creative Arts: Visual Arts (including Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Film and Photography)	4210
Creative Arts: Writing	4211
Film, Visual and Media Studies	4221
History	4213
History of Arts	4214
Musicology/Music History	4215
Translation Studies	4216
Philosophy	4218
Religious Studies	4219
Sexuality and Gender Studies	4220
Cultural Studies / Cultural Policy	4222
Journalism and Media	4407
Contemporary Art	4420
Area Studies (including Japanese Studies, China Studies, European Studies)	4421
Chinese History (including Socio-economic, Military, Legal Social and Cultural History)	4422
Classical Chinese, Chinese Thought and Paleography	4423
Hong Kong Studies	4424
Others – relating to Humanities and Arts (please specify:)	4299

Education

(Subject Area: H4)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Education: Policy & Administration	4301
Education: Research on Teaching & Learning	4302
Education: Language and Literature	4303
Education: Theory and Applications	4304
Others – relating to Education (please specify:)	4399

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Business Studies Research Proposals**

Business Studies
(Subject Area: B)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Accounting	5101
Economics	5102
Finance	5103
Information System Management	5104
Management	5105
Marketing	5106
Operational Research	5107
Operations Management	5108
International Business	5109
Tourism and Hotel Management	5110
Econometrics and Business Statistical Methods	5111
Risk and insurance management	5112
Others (please specify:)	5199