

## RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

### **National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) / Research Grants Council (RGC) Joint Research Scheme (JRS) 2024/25**

#### **Guidance Notes for Completing the Full Proposal Application Form (NSFC/RGC 2)**

All applicants should read these Guidance Notes carefully before completing and submitting your full research proposals. The RGC may stop processing your application if it does not comply with any of the requirements as set out in the Guidance Notes.

#### **GENERAL**

- (a) These notes are intended to be read by applicant(s) / related staff of university(ies) before completion and submission of a NSFC / RGC JRS application. Applicants should also refer to the Call Circular and Invitation for Applications issued for this exercise on 5 December 2023 for application procedures and other requirement details.
- (b) The form comprises three parts: Part I Summary of the Research Proposal; Part II Details of the Research Proposal; and Part III University's Statement on Submission. Please note that the item numbers in these Guidance Notes correspond to those in the Full Proposal Application Form (NSFC/RGC 1b).
- (c) For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in a language other than English, applicant(s) / university(ies) are required to provide an English version on the Abstract and Research Details (Objectives and Impact, Background of Research, Research Plan and Methodology; and Education Plan) in pdf file format.
- (d) In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, applicants must complete the applications, **including attached pdf documents**, in the following standard RGC format. **Failure to comply with the application format and / or the allowable page will lead to disqualification of the application.**

Font:	Times New Roman
Font size:	12 point
Margin:	2.5 cm all round
Spacing:	Single-line spacing
PDF version:	Compatible with Adobe Acrobat Reader 5

- (e) All sections of the relevant parts should be completed. Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert "N.A." or "Nil".

- (f) Hong Kong applicants of shortlisted proposals should submit their full proposals in **one hard copy and one soft copy (with size up to 5MB per proposal saved in a DVD / CD / USB flash drive)** to the University Grants Committee (UGC) Secretariat through the Research Offices (ROs) of their respective universities by **5:00 p.m. on 12 July 2024.**
- (g) To help reduce the cost of processing and save paper, applicants are urged to keep the length of proposals and attachments to the minimum and use double-sided printing / photocopying when making copies. It is important that applicants should comply with the page / word limits specified in various sections of the Full Proposal Application Form. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals exceed the allowable page / word limits in various sections. Only letters of collaboration and supporting documents for the purpose of research ethics / safety approval are allowed to be attached. Supplementary materials such as papers, manuscripts, publications or detailed research work are not acceptable. Applicants should not make use of Sections 7 and 8 to supplement the contents of other sections.
- (h) Information on this Full Proposal Application Form should be consistent with that given in the preliminary application. If not, the full proposal would not be processed further. It is the obligation of the Principal Investigators (PIs) to ensure that their respective applications contain sufficient and consistent information for evaluation. Incomplete submissions (such as those lacking substantial data / information for evaluation) or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to disqualification of application.
- (i) Applicants are not allowed to mention anything not related to the research proposal per se in the Full Proposal Application Form (such as describing the funding rules) with a view to communicating to the reviewers 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.
- (j) Applicants are prohibited to communicate with Members of RGC and its Committees / Panels on the applications submitted with a view to influencing the latter in assessing their applications. Should such act be discovered, the applications concerned will be disqualified.
- (k) Applicants shall not include links to external websites in their applications which contain extra information about the proposed project in the research proposal.
- (l) To safeguard the interests of the researcher and the university, the awardee university bears the primary responsibility for prevention, detection and investigation of research misconduct, including but not limited to misuse of funds, data falsification, plagiarism, self-plagiarism and double-dipping. The university is strongly encouraged to vet the grant applications using anti-plagiarism software before submitting them to the RGC.

- (m) PIs should include the project costs only (excluding on-costs) in the application. The on-costs related to the research projects by the RGC will be disbursed to the universities for their disposal. The UGC Secretariat will liaise with the ROs of the universities on the calculation and disbursement details separately.
- (n) Unless otherwise stated, all funding levels stated in this Full Proposal Application Form are in Hong Kong Dollars.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- (o) Each Mainland or Hong Kong applicant is allowed to submit only one application in the capacity of either the PI under the NSFC / RGC JRS or the Project Coordinator (PC) under the NSFC / RGC Collaborative Research Scheme (CRS) (which was close for applications on 1 March 2024) in the same funding exercise. Applications submitted in both of the abovementioned capacities in the same funding exercise will be disqualified. Should the PIs of either side fail the eligibility check of the NSFC and / or the RGC or withdraw the application, the application will be disqualified and a re-submission with a change of PI in the same funding exercise will not be allowed.
- (p) Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the Hong Kong PI and no applicant should submit more than one application in this capacity. A Hong Kong PI of an on-going NSFC / RGC JRS project or a Hong Kong PC of an on-going NSFC / RGC CRS project is not allowed to submit a new application in the capacity of PI in the current NSFC / RGC JRS exercise unless both collaborative partners have completed the last approved project and the Hong Kong PI has submitted his / her completion report to the RGC before the preliminary application deadline. Nevertheless, a Hong Kong PI will not be subject to the above restrictions if he / she only participates as a team member of the new application. Other joint applicants, if any, will be regarded as Co-Investigators (Co-Is). Each Co-I should have a clear, distinct and material role. Excessive number of Co-Is should be avoided. Save in very exceptional circumstances, the RGC will not entertain requests for the addition of Co-Is to a project after the funding award. Once the application is submitted, **a change of Hong Kong PI during the period of processing the application will not be approved.**
- (q) **A joint proposal submitted by a Mainland PI affiliated with a Mainland institution which is established and operated by the same UGC-funded university of the Hong Kong PI will not be considered as a valid collaboration.** Such application will be disqualified. Examples of invalid collaborations include but are not limited to:

<b>UGC-funded University of Hong Kong PI</b>	<b>Mainland Institution of Mainland PI</b>
Hong Kong Baptist University	Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University United International College
The University of Hong Kong	The University of Hong Kong Shenzhen Institute of Research and Innovation
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou)
City University of Hong Kong	City University of Hong Kong (Dongguan)

- (r) The Hong Kong PI of an RGC project grant must be an academic staff member of an UGC-funded university with conditions of employment meeting **ALL** the following requirements:
- (i) having a full-time<sup>1</sup> appointment in the university proper<sup>2</sup>;
  - (ii) being in Staff Grades from ‘A’ to ‘I’<sup>3</sup> as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) (i.e. from “Professor” to “Assistant Lecturer”, see Annex B of General Research Fund (GRF) 2024/25 “Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (GRF2)”, which is available at the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/form/GRF2.pdf>);
  - (iii) being primarily engaged in and spending at least 80% of time in degree or higher degree work<sup>4</sup> at the university proper; and
  - (iv) salary being wholly funded<sup>5</sup> by the university proper.
- (s) Hong Kong PIs falling in the following categories are subject to the additional requirements besides meeting criteria (r)(i) to (iv) above:
- (i) A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the university on or before 26 January 2024 and that his / her appointment would take effect on or before 1 September 2024;

<sup>1</sup> Excluding part-time staff and staff holding honorary appointments.

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

<sup>3</sup> Excluding polytechnic staff grades.

<sup>4</sup> A PI who is / will be seconded to work full-time or part-time at the two Innovation and Technology (I&T) clusters (i.e. 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 NSFC / RGC JRS.

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

- (v) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being made in October / November 2024 and for at least the first year of the project's planned duration; and
- (vi) A visiting scholar should have a full-time employment at the university proper covering at least one year or the expected duration of the project whichever is the longer.
- (t) An academic staff member who is engaged in non-degree programmes which are still funded by the UGC may also apply and serve as Hong Kong PI. Eligible staff in this category must be wholly funded from the General Funds of the university concerned.
- (u) Notwithstanding these, cases of exceptional circumstances may 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.

## INFORMATION UPDATE

- (v) A brief update of the proposal, if any, should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat on or before **2 August 2024**, indicating any significant changes, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the Hong Kong PIs, addition / removal of Co-Is, alternative funding obtained, declarations of similar / related projects / proposals / research work, investigator(s)'s Curriculum Vitae (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 research proposals substantially. Two hardcopies and one softcopy of the information update should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat on or before **2 August 2024**.
- (w) If an update is provided for ethics / safety approval for an application, the respective ROs should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before **2 August 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.
- (x) If an update is provided for approval for access to Government / official / private data and records for an application, the respective ROs should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before **2 August 2024**. Evidence of approval should also be submitted at this stage.
- (y) If an update is provided on any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, the Hong Kong PI / Co-I(s) should submit the relevant update to the RGC on or before **2 August 2024**.

## ENQUIRIES

- (z) Enquiries about the contents of these Guidance Notes and other related matters about the NSFC / RGC JRS should be directed to the ROs of the universities which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding NSFC / RGC JRS matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the ROs of the universities. Their contact details are as follows:

Mr Winaf Fan  
City University of Hong Kong  
83 Tat Chee Avenue  
Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

Tel.: 3442 7547  
Fax: 3442 0136

Mr Ivan Lau  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
Kowloon Tong  
Kowloon

Tel.: 3411 7751  
Fax: 3411 5133

Ms Connie Lam  
Lingnan University  
8 Castle Peak Road  
Tuen Mun, New Territories

Tel.: 2616 7683  
Fax: 2591 9618

Ms Wenting Zhu  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Shatin  
New Territories

Tel.: 3943 0349  
Fax: 3942 0993

Ms Clara Fong  
Education University of Hong Kong  
10 Lo Ping Road  
Tai Po, New Territories

Tel.: 2948 7700  
Fax: 2948 7697

Ms Claudia Yiu  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hung Hom  
Kowloon

Tel.: 3400 3630  
Fax: 2355 7651

Ms Catherine Leung  
The Hong Kong University of Science  
and Technology  
Clear Water Bay, Kowloon

Tel.: 2358 6946  
Fax: 2358 1541

Miss Kay Ling  
The University of Hong Kong  
Pokfulam Road  
Hong Kong

Tel.: 2859 1181  
Fax: 2803 0558

- (aa) 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 the “Guidelines on Handling of Research Misconduct Cases” available at the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/guidelines/index.html>.
- (bb) Applicants are also requested to read carefully the guidelines on “Handling of Information and Personal Data Contained in RGC Research Funding Application” (at Annex A of GRF 2024/25 “Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (GRF2)” on the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/form/GRF2.pdf>). Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the Full Proposal Application Form may contact the ROs of their own universities.

## **PART I SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

### **1. Names and Academic Affiliations of PIs**

To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of PIs, PIs 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:

	<b>PI Surname</b>	<b>PI Other Name *</b>
e.g.	Chan	Peter Tai-wai
e.g.	Zhong	Yaping
e.g.	Robinson	Philip G

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

### **2. Particulars of the Research Project**

- (a) Please provide the project title in both English and Chinese. The project title should be informative, but short and concise and should be exactly the same as that used in the preliminary proposal and the proposal submitted to the NSFC.
- (b) All applicants must indicate with caution the nature of the application being submitted:
  - “New” refers to an application on research topic which the Hong Kong PI and / or Co-I(s) applies / apply for RGC funds for the first time.
  - “Re-submission” refers to an application on research topic which the Hong Kong PI and / or Co-I(s) has / have previously submitted or is largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to but not supported by the UGC / RGC or other funding agencies.
  - “Continuation” refers to an application continuing the work previously funded by the UGC / RGC.
- (c)&(d) The focus area and project fields should be the same as those in the preliminary proposal. Please refer to the list of subject areas at Annex C of GRF 2024/25 “Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (GRF2)”, which is available on the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/form/GRF2.pdf>.
- (e) Please give a maximum of five keywords to characterize the work of the proposal.



(f)&(g) The NSFC / RGC JRS aims to support research projects with a duration of four years. For Hong Kong applicants, the grant sought for each project should not exceed **HK\$1.25 million** (exclusive of on-costs).

### **3. Abstract of Research Comprehensible to a non-Specialist**

A short abstract of a maximum of 400 words comprehensible to a non-specialist should be given. This should be informative and indicative of the nature of research to be conducted. If a proposal is funded, the Hong Kong PI is required to submit the Chinese abstract (or an English abstract if the original abstract is presented in Chinese) shortly after the announcement of the funding results. Both versions of the abstract of a funded project will be uploaded on the RGC website for public's information.

## **PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

### **RESEARCH DETAILS**

This is the major portion of the proposal. It should be presented clearly and concisely and at the same time be detailed enough to indicate the significance and merits of the proposed research and to permit a meaningful evaluation of the worthiness of the project. The RGC will not further process the application if insufficient / incomplete information is provided on the Full Proposal Application Form.

#### **1. Objectives and Impact**

*(a maximum of 800 words in total for the objectives and impact)*

- (a) The objectives of the project must be presented in point form and reasons for undertaking the project shall be provided. Applicants are required to identify the key issues and problems being addressed. The key issues and the elements of the problem should be described and those elements which are critical to the solution of the problem should be clearly identified.
- (b) Applicants are required to state the possible outcome of the research project, its relevance, significance and value, such as contribution to academic, educational, scientific or professional development or potential for practical application.

#### **2. Background of Research, Research Plan and Methodology**

*(a maximum of eight A4 pages in total for Sections 2(a) and (b))*

- (a) State whether work has been / is being carried out by you and / or others on a related subject. Outline what motivates you to undertake the proposed research, previous and alternative approaches to the problem and their deficiencies, and list 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.
- (b) A complete description of the research plan and the selected approach to the problem solution should be given. Where appropriate, experiments, tests and required facilities should be described. The relevant scientific principles and techniques on which the problem solution depends should also be presented. Outline uniqueness and justification of the proposed approach with its plan of investigation, giving citation from literature where applicable.
- (c) A one-page Gantt chart showing the research activities should be given.

- (d) A maximum of two additional A4 pages for diagrams, photos, charts and tables, etc., if any.
- (e) The page limit of Sections 1 and 2 does not include references. A maximum of three A4 pages for references is allowed for listing the publications cited in Sections 1 and 2. All references should be provided in full and include all authors. Generally accepted citation format (e.g. American Psychological Association (APA) format) should be used.
- (f) Applicants are required to list the name of journal, conference or other dissemination means, e.g. book chapter, for dissemination of research output and the target timing of dissemination, e.g. 2026 3Q.

### **3. Re-submission of a Proposal not Supported Previously**

- (a) Hong Kong PI should provide details in case the proposal is a re-submission (submitted to the UGC / RGC before) or is largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to the UGC / RGC or other funding bodies. It is the responsibility of the Hong Kong PI to declare clearly and honestly whether the proposal is a re-submission. Hong Kong PI should re-visit the main concerns / suggestions previously expressed by external reviewers if an earlier / similar version of the proposal has been assessed before. 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. Applicants should provide the number of times of re-submission since its first submission and proposal reference number(s) (if applicable), and provide a summary of all the previous submissions and the revisions made to each of the previous submissions.
- (b)&(c) These sections allow the applicant to respond to those comments, and explain whether and what changes have been incorporated in the latest proposal. Some external reviewers' comments may be more agreeable / disagreeable than others. However, if a rebuttal is offered, it should be scholarly and preferably measured. Under the existing policy, re-submitted proposals will be treated as fresh applications in peer-review and handled in an identical manner to other new applications. Although the JRS Subject Panels will take into account the Hong Kong PIs' responses to the reviewers' comments, the Panels are not obliged to invite the same group of external reviewers for assessment of the new application.

## **PROJECT FUNDING**

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 impose penalty on any universities which fail 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.

### Permissible items

- A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. Hong Kong PIs and 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 forms of payment.
- 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 (RA) specifically employed for this project; and purchase of equipment necessary for the investigation but not available in the university(ies).
- In cases where a particular RA is employed for several projects, his / her salary should be apportioned accordingly.
- The "General Expenses" item is a catch-all category for costs which cannot be included in any of the other items.
- Detailed justifications should be provided. Otherwise, the RGC will not consider the request.

#### **4. Cost and Justification**

- (a) Estimated cost and resource implications

##### One-line vote items

- (a)(i) Supporting staff costs

Please state the number, rank, duties, duration and cost of staff involved, with justifications for the proposed rank and duration. The RGC normally supports

research support staff at the level of RA, post-doctoral fellows or research postgraduate students. If supporting staff of a higher grade and / or other personnel are requested, detailed justifications should be provided. The rates for RA and Senior RA (SRA) in the academic year 2024/25 are HK\$361,000 per annum and HK\$579,000 per annum respectively. These indicative rates are for reference and will be reviewed regularly by the RGC. 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, their CVs in one A4 page should also be attached if available.

(a)(ii) Equipment expenses

Please itemize all equipment expenses. RGC fund must not be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, iPad, MP3 Players, digital cameras and PDAs except with sound justifications as approved by the RGC. In addition, the RGC will not provide funding for the purchase or use of standard equipment such as desktop computers, 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 universities' 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:

- (i) Why is the equipment essential to the project?
- (ii) Has the department / university already provided such equipment?
- (iii) Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities and what is the possibility of sharing?
- (iv) Provide information supporting the estimated cost of equipment, e.g. quotes from suppliers. Items costing over HK\$200,000 and without supporting quotations will NOT be considered.

Please mark respective item number(s) clearly in the quotation(s). The quotation(s) must be submitted together with the application on or before the deadline of submission of applications. No late submission will be accepted.

For purchase of equipment at or over HK\$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 number 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 / institutions other than the collaborating universities / institutions under the application? If yes, please state the extent of shared use by other universities / institutions such as the number of hours available for sharing per week.

(a)(iii) Outsourcing expenses 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 Hong Kong PIs to subcontract 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 Hong Kong 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 subcontracted out, for instance data collection work, should not be the main intellectual focus of the research project;
- The persons / organizations providing the subcontracting services should be at arm's length with the Hong Kong 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 Hong Kong PIs or their team members should be involved in monitoring the subcontracting services or the supervision of the

subcontracting services.

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

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

(a)(iv) General expenses

Outsourcing services other than those specified in (a)(iii) above should be included under general expenses. Please itemize all general expenses. For services / purchase over HK\$200,000, price quotations must be provided. Please mark respective item number(s) clearly in the quotation(s). The quotation(s) must be submitted together with the application on or before the deadline of submission of applications. No late submission will be accepted.

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

The RGC funding will also provide support for reasonable expenses for receiving, and subsistence allowance for, the Mainland collaborators in Hong Kong, and passage for Hong Kong researchers to visit collaborators in the Mainland. For visits made by the Hong Kong project team, the city to be visited, estimated passage cost, duration of visits, and number of travellers for each trip should be stated and justified. The objectives which the visit(s) aim(s) for should also be stated. Travel of research postgraduate students must be accompanied by the Hong Kong PI and with justifications provided. For the trips made by the Mainland team to Hong Kong, the number of travellers, proposed subsistence rate and the duration of stay for each trip should also be clearly stated. The information should be consistent with that in the proposal submitted by the Mainland team. The prevailing reference rate for subsistence is HK\$900 per day and the subsistence allowance for receiving the Mainland team will be funded at the reference rate or the rate proposed by the PIs concerned, whichever is lower.

(a)(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 HK\$20,000 per year, irrespective of the number of investigators involved in the project, is normally allowed for each funded project.

*Earmarked items*

(a)(vi) High-performance computing services expenses

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

(a)(vii) Research-related software licence / database / dataset expenses

For requests for purchase / subscription of research-related software licence(s) / database(s) / dataset(s), price quotations should be provided. Requests without quotation may not be considered. The university should not use the RGC funds to purchase standard software licences / databases / datasets.

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

**5. Existing Facilities and Major Equipment Available for this Research Project**

Please elaborate the existing facilities and equipment available for this research project.

**6. 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 Section 4(a) of Part II.

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.



## **COLLABORATION DETAILS**

### **7. Particulars of PI and Co-I(s)**

- (a) Please provide information about the PI and project team members. The PI should indicate whether he / she or any of the team member(s) is / are UGC / RGC / RGC Panel / Committee Member(s) as at the deadline of the application. For the Hong Kong team, please provide the number of hours per week to be spent by the Hong Kong PI and each Co-I on the proposed project.

Local applicants in all capacities are required to provide an ORCID iD to facilitate identification of researchers. Non-local applicants in the capacity of PIs / Co-I(s) are encouraged to provide their ORCID iDs. ORCID iD can be registered for free at <http://orcid.org>.

- (b) This section should summarize the qualifications of both teams' PIs and each of the Co-I(s) who will be involved in the project. The CV(s) to be attached should include the following information, as appropriate:

Name, academic qualifications, previous academic position(s) held (with date(s)) and present position (state if applicant is a visiting academic from overseas), previous relevant research work, publication records including the five most representative publications in the recent five years and five representative publications beyond the recent five years (within ten years at maximum) and others including research-related prizes and awards, brief descriptions of experience in consultancies, service as a referee in evaluating other grant applications, patents, PhD theses supervised, etc.

The author list of the publications in the CV(s) 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 the JRS Subject Panels' consideration. Failure to comply with the above requirements may lead to disqualification of the concerned application.

Each CV should be limited to two A4 pages in the standard RGC format stated in item (d) of "GENERAL" of the Guidance Notes (NSFC/RGC 2) above.

- (c) Please give details of the plan(s) of collaboration. The role and specific task(s) of each individual (including the PI and Co-Is) in the proposed research should be described clearly. This section should be limited to two A4 pages in standard RGC format. The Hong Kong PI should confirm that each of the Hong Kong Co-I(s) listed in the proposal has explicitly agreed to serve in the project team and a copy of the proposal has been provided to each of them. Letter(s) of collaboration from the Co-I(s) should be attached. Further documentary proof on the collaboration should be provided upon request of the RGC / Secretariat.

**8. Education Plan**

*(a maximum of one A4 page in standard RGC format)*

Hong Kong PIs are required to provide the proposed educational activities relating to the proposed research.

**DECLARATION OF RELATED PROPOSALS / RESEARCH WORK and GRANT RECORD**

**9. Grant Record and Related Proposals / Research work of Hong Kong PI and Co-I(s)**

It is the responsibility of applicants (both Hong Kong PI and Co-I(s)) to ensure that no duplicate funding from all sources including the RGC will be sought / has been sought for the same / substantially similar research project. Failure to declare similar / related projects / proposals / research work (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. Hong Kong PI / Co-I(s) are required to declare any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, and provide clarifications which distinguish that related research work from the work requested to be funded through this proposal.

It is the RGC to make the final decision on whether two projects / proposals / research work are similar. The judgement of the RGC is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the Hong Kong PI or the Co-I(s) to declare related projects / proposals / research work when there is uncertainty. The Hong Kong PI and the Co-I(s) are advised to make the declaration and elaborate the difference in the projects / proposals / research work to avoid misunderstanding. Declaration of related projects / proposals / research work does not necessarily mean that the proposals concerned will be adversely affected. The RGC may still fund the proposals concerned if the applicants are able to justify the differences of the projects / proposals / research work for separate funding.

- (a) For the Hong Kong PI, please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals / work undertaken / submitted by the PI (in the capacity of Project Coordinator (PC) / PI / Co-PI / Co-I) including:
- (i) research projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) which were completed in the past five years;
  - (ii) on-going research projects funded from all sources (including those funded but yet to commence; 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 / research work under (i), (ii) and (iii) as well as the number of hours per week spent on each of the on-going projects (except the involvement as Co-I in GRF / JRS projects funded by RGC) under (ii).

The PI should also 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 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 which 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 each of the research projects / proposals / work undertaken / submitted by each Co-I (in the capacity of PC / PI) including:
- (i) on-going research projects funded from all sources (including those funded but yet to commence; irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); and
  - (ii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC).

Each Co-I should also 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 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 which 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.

- (c) Major research output of previously funded projects  
(a maximum of 400 words in standard RGC format for each project)

Please include the key results and publications in respect of each previously UGC / RGC and non-UGC / RGC funded project undertaken by the Hong Kong PI and each Co-I, in descending chronological order, which are relevant to the application.

## **ANCILLARY INFORMATION**

### **10. Research Ethics / Safety Approval and Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records**

- (a) Research ethics / safety approval

It is the responsibility of the university and the Hong Kong PI to ensure that the research proposal is carefully reviewed for its compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Approval from appropriate authority(ies) should be sought for research involving safety hazards, the study of artefacts or the use of living animals and / or human subjects including those in 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 of seeking the relevant approval and ethics clearance rests with the Hong Kong PI. The PI's university is required to complete and sign Part III of the Full Proposal Application Form to confirm the details on ethics and safety, in particular whether the research proposal involves human subjects and certify whether the relevant approval is required and if so, the relevant approval has 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. Please also see the respective notes in Part III below.

- (b) Access to Government / official / private data and records

It is the responsibility of the university and the Hong Kong 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 Hong Kong PI. The PI's university is required to complete and sign Part III of the Full Proposal Application Form to confirm the relevant approval, if necessary, has been given / is being sought.

For both Sections 10(a) and (b), applications should not be submitted unless the approval of the appropriate authority(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 **8 August 2024**.

If the university / Hong Kong PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / JRS Subject Panels considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

**11. Release of Completion Report, Data Archive Possibilities, and Public Access of Publications Resulting from Research Funded by the RGC**

(a) Release of completion report

Hong Kong PIs are required to release the completion reports (containing abstract in non-technical terms, objectives, research output including the list of conference papers / publications / journals and research findings and contact information of PI) to the public through the RGC website. PIs should assess data archive potential and opportunities for data sharing. Due additional weight will be given to an application where the applicants are willing to make research data available to others.

Hong Kong PIs are required to include in the completion reports the URL links to the university's repositories or the publishers' websites so that the public could have quick and easy access to the manuscripts or journal articles. PIs are also encouraged to include in their completion reports the data repositories where research data of their projects could be accessed and shared, where appropriate.

With a view to further promoting open access and obtaining a more in-depth understanding of the local open access landscape, the RGC will collect open-access-related information of peer-reviewed journal publications arising directly from the project.

(b) Public access of publication resulting from research funded by the RGC

- (i) upon acceptance of a paper for publication resulting from the work done on a research project funded in whole or in part by the RGC, the Hong Kong PI should check whether the publisher already allows (A) full open access to the publisher's version, or (B) the author's depositing a copy of the paper (either the publisher's version or the final accepted manuscript after peer-review) in the university's repository for open access;
- (ii) if both (i)(A) and (B) are not allowed, the Hong Kong PI should request the publisher's permission to place either version in his / her university's repository for restricted access immediately upon publication or after an embargo period of up to 12 months if required by the publisher; and
- (iii) subject to the publisher's agreement on (i) or (ii) above, the Hong Kong PI should deposit a copy of the publication in his / her university's repository as early as possible but no later than six months after publication or the embargo period, if any.

## **12. Exclusion of Reviewers**

If, for any reason of possible conflicts of interest, the Hong Kong PI wants to exclude a person from reviewing his / her application, he / she should submit the request in writing separately through the respective RO setting out the full circumstances and justifications. Such request should not be made under any section of the Full Proposal Application Form which in its entirety will be sent to reviewers for assessment. In all cases, the RGC reserves the right of final decision on the selection and invitation of reviewers having regard to the merits involved.

### **PART III UNIVERSITY'S STATEMENT ON SUBMISSION**

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

#### **1. University's Endorsement on Eligibility and Accuracy on Submission**

The university should confirm that it has evaluated and given support to the application before submission to the RGC.

To safeguard the interests of the researcher and the university, universities bear primary responsibility for prevention, detection and investigation of research misconduct, including but not limited to misuse of funds, data falsification, plagiarism, self-plagiarism and double-dipping. University is strongly advised to use anti-plagiarism software before submitting the application to the RGC and verify if this application has been scanned by anti-plagiarism software and provide reason(s) for not doing so.

The university is also required to confirm that (i) the Hong Kong PI fully meets the criteria for the RGC grant under NSFC / RGC JRS; (ii) the existing teaching load is verified; and (iii) the applicant will have the number of hours per week as declared in Section 7(a) of Part II of the Full Proposal Application Form 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 Hong Kong PI subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant and recommend to the RGC for approval a suitable new Hong Kong PI, if any, to take over / conclude the commenced project.

#### **2. University's Commitments on Support for Staff and other Personnel**

(a) & (b) The university is required to verify and confirm whether the NSFC / RGC JRS application is in line with its role, and that adequate supervision, research facilities and training provisions are in place to meet the needs of research postgraduate 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 Hong Kong PI of the RGC grant is to complete the project according to the plan and that the training of students should not be used to justify any delay in project completion nor unsatisfactory project performance.

(c) to (g) For items (c) to (g), please see the notes in Section 4(a) of Part II.

**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 safety hazards, the study of artefacts or the use of living animals and / or human subjects, including those in social sciences research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harms, discomfort or stress to human subjects that a research project might generate, subjects' privacy, etc.). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the universities to ascertain if they involve human subjects. If they do, the university must give approval / exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by **8 August 2024** as is the case with other ethics / safety approval. If the university is unable to confirm by **8 August 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 applications involving clinical trials, PIs are allowed to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement.
- (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 **8 August 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 / Hong Kong PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / JRS Subject Panels eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

Part III should be completed and signed by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible staff in the university.

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UGC Secretariat  
June 2024