

Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements for Funding Schemes Administered by the Research Grants Council

These guidelines set out the disbursement, accounting and monitoring arrangements for funding schemes administered by the Research Grants Council (RGC). Grant recipients and their respective institutions should observe the requirements in the guidelines and check with the UGC Secretariat where clarification is needed.

Funding Schemes

2. Funding for the RGC is provided by the Government through the University Grants Committee (UGC) in the form of Earmarked Research Grant (ERG), and if necessary, supplemented from the UGC Central Allocation Vote. The ERG is disbursed in four main segments to support the academic research by staff of the UGC-funded institutions:

- (A) Direct Allocation Grant
- (B) General Research Fund
- (C) Collaborative Research Fund
- (D) Grants under the Joint Research Schemes

Starting from 2005/06, the Government earmarked an annual allocation of \$20 million to the RGC for promoting public policy research in the higher education sector. The Central Policy Unit provides this funding allocation under two funding schemes:

- (E) Public Policy Research funding scheme and
- (F) Strategic Public Policy Research funding scheme

Roles of the Principal Investigators and sponsoring institutions

3. RGC grants, though awarded to specific projects in the names of individual Principal Investigators (PIs), are actually grants allocated to institutions. While the PI is held responsible for the overall management, implementation and completion of a research project, the sponsoring institution is also required to assume the important role of managing the projects and

putting in place a due internal monitoring system. Whenever irregularities have been detected, institutions have the responsibility in rectifying and following up the cases closely. Where the RGC's approval and advice is required to be sought, institutions are expected to exercise their judgement to ensure that only fully justifiable cases are recommended to the RGC for consideration.

(A) Direct Allocation Grant

Disbursement arrangement

4. Direct Allocation Grant is allocated directly to the institutions to support small projects costing less than \$200,000 each, carried out by new and junior faculty members on a competitive basis. It is normally released to institutions in two instalments (75% in July and 25% in April of the following year). No specific condition is set for the institutions and they have the discretion in the use of this grant. Institutions are expected to demonstrate fairness and rationality in their internal policies for the allocation of this grant.

Monitoring arrangement

5. Institutions are required to report on the grants disbursement and number of projects funded by Direct Allocation Grant in their "Annual Report on Research Activities" which is normally submitted to the RGC in October/November each year.

(B) General Research Fund

Disbursement arrangement

6. The major proportion of the ERG is allocated on the basis of competitive bids by the institutions for academic research projects under the General Research Fund (GRF) exercise. The grants are awarded via a process of external peer review. Funding approved under the GRF exercise is allocated to institutions, not to individual PIs. They are normally released in two instalments (75% in July and 25% in April of the following year), depending on individual cases and subject to specific conditions.

Accounting arrangements

Approved scope

7. Institutions should ensure that the RGC grants are used appropriately and reasonably within the approved scope and timeframe. In principle, all research grants awarded/administered by the RGC should primarily be used in undertaking research work in Hong Kong, and that any outsourcing of work amounting to “sub-contracting research work out of Hong Kong” should be strictly prohibited. Nevertheless, it would be legitimate for the PIs to use the grant for data collection outside Hong Kong if this is a necessary and justified part of the research, and the RGC would consider such requests on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the merits and justifications provided by the PI.

(a) Research Support Staff

Funding support may be provided for the remuneration of research support staff like Senior Research Assistants and Research Assistants, who assist in conducting research work of RGC funded projects concerned and are remunerated with salary. RGC grants must not be used to remunerate PIs and Co-Investigators (Co-Is) or to subsidise their salaries, including honorarium, in any way.

(b) Relief Teacher

In very exceptional circumstances and upon detailed and sound justifications, the RGC will provide limited funding for supporting a relief teacher for the purpose of releasing the PI of a project for research. The funding is an earmarked sum, out of the approved project grant, for hiring a relief teacher at the institution. This earmarked amount is not transferable and should not be used to meet other items of expenses of the approved project.

(c) Provision of Research Experience for Undergraduate Students

The funding is an earmarked sum for providing an undergraduate student helper with a monthly allowance of up to \$2,500 for a maximum of ten months on a matching basis (i.e. the RGC and the institution will each contribute \$1,250 per month). This amount is not transferable and should not be used to meet other items of expenses of the approved project. To provide comprehensive research experience, the undergraduate student helper should be the same one throughout the project. Change of the undergraduate student helper requires RGC's prior approval and justifications should be provided. Monitoring of the undergraduate students' participation in the research projects is the joint responsibility of the PIs and the institutions. The results of the undergraduate students' participation in the research projects must be included in the annual progress reports and completion reports of the projects.

(d) Equipment

Specialised equipment essential for the approved project and not otherwise provided by the institution will be funded. Institutions may however be expected to meet part of such cost if the equipment will be available for other research projects or teaching during the project's duration. Upon completion of the approved project, the equipment acquired can be redeployed at the discretion of the institution. Institutions should report such internal redeployments of major items of research equipment (costing \$500,000 and over) to the RGC. The RGC may consider possible redeployment of such major equipment items for use by other institutions where appropriate or practicable. Should an approved project be terminated for any reason, the RGC reserves the right to redeploy any equipment acquired by the RGC grants.

Notwithstanding that the approved projects are fully funded or the equipment items have been included in the research

proposals, the PIs and the institutions must not use the RGC grants to purchase:

(i) personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPod, MP3 Players, digital cameras and PDAs; and

(ii) standard equipment such as desktop PCs, servers, laptop computers, printers and scanners and standard software / software licence / dataset known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided in the institutions, except with sound justifications as approved by the RGC.

(e) Travel/Conference Grant

On request, a conference grant of \$12,000 per year is given to encourage the PI / Co-I and other research personnel (research students / Research Assistants / Research Fellows / Postdoc) engaged in the approved project to meet travelling and associated expenses for attending recognised international conference(s) to deliver paper(s) related to the project. The conference grant is part of the one-line vote for the project and need not be accounted for separately.

(f) Infrastructural Support/Overheads

Approved projects may be funded fully or partially by the RGC. Where required, institutions may top-up partially funded projects from other funding sources to ensure that these projects can realistically work towards their goals. Apart from contributions towards specialised equipment, institutions can provide necessary infrastructural and overheads supports such as normal academic equipment, consumables (consumable research materials, however, may be funded by the RGC grant as necessary), postage, fax, stationery, reference books, overseas telephone charges etc. to the approved projects. Starting from 2009/10, an additional 15% of the project grant awarded will be allocated to the institutional management as on-costs. Institutions should use the on-costs to cover indirect costs.

On approval of new projects

8. Institutions are required to create a reserve account, to which unexpended grant balances for active projects will be transferred at the end of the academic year, to be carried forward to the following year, or to the next triennium.

9. A project grant is, unless otherwise stated, a one-line vote without further division into sub-allocations. Virement between approved budget items within the same project does not require RGC's approval. If a PI wishes to spend the money on an item that is not covered by the approved budget, he / she has to seek the approval from the RGC on this new item via the Electronic System. Virement between projects are not allowed.

10. The official start date for all the newly approved projects will be 1 January of the following year, unless the PI advises an earlier date. Project grants must not be expended earlier than the project commencement date. Any deferral beyond 1 January will require the prior approval from the RGC. Under no circumstances will a project be allowed to be deferred beyond 12 months of the announcement of the funding results. If the project does not commence within 12 months of the announcement of the funding results, the RGC will withdraw the funding support. PIs have the discretion to decline a grant before commencement of the project if they do not consider it viable to carry out the projects. The RGC will not attach any penalty to such cases.

11. To enable easy data retrieval, the PIs of newly approved projects are required to submit essential data via the Electronic System by the first working day of October. The essential data cover the information provided by PIs on revised project estimates including funding provided from other sources, revised start / scheduled completion dates, PIs' Chinese names and Chinese project titles etc.

12. In case a project budget is substantially reduced and the PI does not decline the grant, the PI concerned is required to submit via the Electronic System the revised objectives or work programme together with the revised budget for consideration by the appropriate RGC panel by the first working day of October. Comments by the RGC on the revisions will be provided to the PI through the institution as soon as practicable. In any event, a PI should only accept a grant when he is satisfied that the funding approved by the RGC plus

other resources available will be sufficient for the completion of the project. For on-going projects, requests for revision of project objectives should be separately submitted to the RGC for consideration as and when deemed necessary (see paragraph 24 (d)).

On termination / completion of projects

13. For cases where the PI becomes ineligible for the grant (e.g. on prolonged no-pay / professional leave / leaving Hong Kong / incapable of managing the project) prior to the completion of the project, the project should normally be considered as terminated unless a suitable Co-I who has been involved in the project since commencement is available and considered suitable by the RGC to take over the role of PI. Institutions should notify the RGC as soon as the PI's departure / leave has been confirmed and the project account should be frozen at the same time.

14. The following accounting rules should be observed in handling project termination:

- (a) Once the project account is frozen, both the PI and the institution are obliged to cease immediately committing or incurring new expenditures under the account except for committed and uncancellable normal expenditure of salary to Research Assistants or equivalent employed before project termination date (i.e. payment in lieu of notice when staff's contracts have to be terminated as a result) and ordered equipment (where penalties are involved for cancellation of order). But such expenses must be solely and directly related to the project in question and have been committed before the project account is frozen.
- (b) Should the RGC eventually reject a PI's request for change or temporary waiver of eligibility requirements and the date of termination takes retrospective effect from the commencement of PI's departure, leave or original completion date, the institution is required to return the expenses incurred by the project starting from the retrospective termination date except under very exceptional circumstances.

- (c) Institutions are required to return the unspent balance (and expenses incurred since the retrospective termination date if applicable) and submit a concluding report (Form GRF 8A) to the RGC within 6 months of termination.
- (d) The RGC will consider the possible redeployment of the equipment acquired by RGC grants where necessary. Exceptional cases will be considered by the RGC on their individual merits.

15. The project account in respect of a completed project should be frozen immediately after the completion date, and any request for additional expenses incurred after that date to the unspent balance of the project must not be entertained. Institutions are given the discretion to allow charging certain expenses shortly after the project completion date to the unspent project balance in justified circumstances. This is however an exception rather than the rule. Before exercising such discretions, institutions must satisfy themselves that the expenses are strictly necessary for dissemination of research results (e.g. attendance at important international conferences and essential publication work). In any case, usage of unspent balance to meet the costs of purchase of stores/equipment or staff salaries beyond the project completion date is strictly prohibited.

16. It is the onus of institutions to verify any claim of expenses incurred while the account is frozen and to satisfy themselves that due efforts have been made to ascertain whether to pay the expenses incurred after the project account has been frozen. For audit purpose and in order to ensure accountability, institutions and the PI are required to provide an itemized report of such expenses, together with corresponding justifications, in the relevant Statement of Accounts of the projects.

17. Upon termination / completion of a project, the institution is required to return the unspent balance together with a Statement of Accounts to the UGC Secretariat within 6 months of project termination / completion date. For projects submitted in the electronic mode to the RGC in the application stage, (i.e. projects of Physical Sciences Panel approved in the exercise of 2003/04 or thereafter, Engineering Panel approved in the exercise of 2005/06 or thereafter, Biology and Medicine Panel approved in the exercise of 2007/08

or thereafter, and Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies Panel approved in the exercise of 2007/08 or thereafter), institutions should submit the Statement of Accounts to the UGC Secretariat through the Electronic System and send in the unspent balance in form of cheques with a printed copy of the Statement of Accounts for identification. For projects submitted in paper mode to the RGC in the application stage, institutions should submit the Statement of Accounts in the format of Annex A and any unspent balance in the form of cheques by mail.

18. On the portion of the on-costs, pro-rata amount should be returned to the UGC Secretariat with the unspent balance of the project grant. For instance, if there is an unspent balance of \$10,000 from the project grant, a pro-rata amount of \$1,500 from the on-costs should be returned to the UGC Secretariat as well (i.e. \$11,500 in total).

19. The RGC reserves the right to withdraw support for particular projects by giving appropriate advance notice.

Accounting Arrangement for Clinical Research Fellowship Scheme (CRFS)

20. The CRFS is tied to the annual GRF funding exercise and its award is conditional on the GRF proposal being approved. Each fellowship is pitched at the sum of the annual salary and annual cash allowance of the applicant or \$1,200,000 starting from 2009/10, whichever is the less (the RGC and host university will each be responsible for contributing 50% of the fellowship annually) for a maximum of three consecutive years. The duration of the award will be the approved duration of the GRF research project. The fellowship grant can be used to support the maintenance costs of a fellow or to meet the salary costs of the replacement academic staff who have to be employed by the host university to take over the fellow's duties for the period of the fellowship. If the fellow is a clinician from the Hospital Authority (HA) and he chooses to remain on the payroll of HA, the host university may alternatively use the grant to hire a clinician replacement to relieve the fellow for the sole purpose of taking up the approved research work. Nonetheless, the fellow must have a full-time appointment with the university and report to the university only throughout the fellowship. In all circumstances, the fellowship fund cannot be used to defray any research expenses which should instead be covered by the GRF grant awarded to the relevant research proposal.

21. The annual matching grant of the RGC (i.e. 50% of each fellowship) is normally released in July / August each year as part of the GRF allocation. The host university is responsible for the creation of a fellowship account for the management of the necessary funds and is required to report on the disbursements and the account balance. For accounting purposes, the university is required to submit a separate statement of balance to the RGC to account for the expenses in respect of the fellowship award. Such statement should be attached to the mid-term report / annual progress report for the relevant GRF project (as required in paragraphs 25-27) for inspection by the RGC.

22. The fellowship award is non-transferable. When a fellow departs from his or her host university or no longer becomes eligible for the award, the fellowship must be terminated immediately and the remaining funds in the fellowship account will be returned to the RGC and the university on an equal basis.

Accounting Arrangement for Longer-term Research Projects

23. Longer term projects are GRF projects and all rules on accounting and reporting requirements for GRF will also apply. However, the grants for longer term projects will be disbursed by two instalments and the portion for each instalment will be decided by the RGC. The first instalment (also subject to the 75% - 25% separate payment arrangement) will be paid into the institution's account alongside with other GRF grants. The second instalment will be released after the second annual progress report has been received and subject to satisfactory progress of the project and RGC Panel's recommendation.

Changes to approved projects

24. All major changes to approved projects require RGC's prior approval.

(a) General principles

(i) Where the proposed changes are initiated by the PI, the institution should consider them internally before

forwarding its recommendation, with any additional information, to the RGC for consideration. Both the PIs and the institutions have the responsibility to file the applications for RGC's approval in good time and well in advance of the effective date of proposed changes / waivers. If a PI's request for change / waiver is submitted to the RGC after or just shortly before the effective date of the proposed change / waiver, his / her project is liable to the risk of being terminated with retrospective effect from the date of his / her departure (for change of PI), the commencement of his / her leave (for temporary waiver of eligibility requirements) or the original completion date (for project extension). In such a case, the institution will be required to return the expenses incurred by the project since the retrospective termination date except under very exceptional circumstances. If the RGC's approval is still pending by the original completion date or by the time the PI has become ineligible to hold the grant, the project account in question should be frozen immediately until the RGC's approval is granted.

- (ii) For projects submitted in the electronic mode to the RGC in the application stage (see paragraph 17 for the periods of submission), requests for changes should be done by the PIs and the institutions via the Electronic System by "Change Request". For projects submitted in paper mode to the RGC in the application stage, requests for changes should be made in writing by PIs and submitted to the institutions for support and onward transmission to the UGC Secretariat.

(b) Change of PI and Co-I

As a matter of policy, no change of PI would be approved within the first six months of an approved project. However, change of PI between the 7th and the 12th month may be considered by the RGC under the following circumstances:

- (i) Clear evidence can be provided by the PI to the satisfaction of the RGC that when the project commences, he / she is not aware of the changing circumstances that may not allow him / her to complete the project;
- (ii) Genuine and convincing reasons in support of the change for PI must be given (e.g. departure of PI due to emigration, change of profession, ill health, etc.) and supported by the institution concerned; and
- (iii) A suitable Co-I who has been involved in the project since commencement is available and considered suitable by the RGC to take over the role of PI. In this connection, the PI and Co-I concerned are required to complete the proforma at Annex B and submit it to the UGC Secretariat via the institution. The institution should provide confirmation that the nominated Co-I meets all the RGC eligibility requirements as the PI of the approved project.

Once the research protocol and the composition of a research team have been approved, the RGC normally does not entertain requests to add Co-Is save in very exceptional circumstances. Institutions are expected to exercise their judgement before forwarding recommendations to the RGC for consideration.

- (c) PIs proceeding on prolonged no-pay / professional leave

PIs, who are on no-pay / professional leave for a continuous or cumulative period exceeding 183 days within the project period but wish to continue as PIs, are required to seek the RGC's approval in advance for temporary waiver of eligibility requirements. No approval for such waiver will be granted to those PIs who are on no-pay leave for a continuous or cumulative period exceeding 1 year within the project period, and under no circumstances would approval be given to those PIs who will take up full-time employment with another organization / institution not funded by the UGC during the leave. If the temporary waiver is approved, no extension and change of the

objectives of the projects concerned will be allowed. Institutions should seek the RGC's approval for the temporary waiver before granting the leave. The application for waiver may be considered by the RGC under the following circumstances:

- (i) Evidence is provided that the PI is able to continue to oversee the project during his / her leave; and
- (ii) An undertaking must be signed by the PI to confirm that he / she will return to the concerned UGC-funded institution upon expiry of his / her leave.

Failing to do so, the RGC has to terminate the project and as a result, the institution is required to return the RGC grant spent during his / her leave.

(d) Revision of project objectives

Research projects are selected on the basis of, among other things, the objectives stated in the original proposals. The PIs should not alter the project objectives without seeking the prior approval of the RGC. In case revision of project objectives is warranted, the PIs should seek formal approval through their institutions. The institutions will exercise their judgement, recommend the justifiable cases and confirm the new institutional commitments, if any, to the RGC for consideration.

(e) Transfer of project to another institution

When the PI takes up an appointment at another UGC-funded institution before the completion of a project, the RGC may approve the transfer of the balance of the allocation for the project (normally together with the equipment where justified and appropriate) to the receiving institution, after consultation with the institutions concerned. The outgoing institution should report any changes in the appointment status of the PIs to the RGC. RGC's prior approval is needed to effect the transfer of projects.

- (f) Extension of project completion date
- (i) For extension of a period of 6 months and less, the authority is with the institution. The PIs should apply to their institutions direct. The RGC must be notified of the extension approved by institutions before the original completion date of the project.
 - (ii) For extension beyond 6 months, the RGC's approval is needed. For projects with 3-year duration, the PIs are required to submit up-to-date progress reports (Form GRF 7) (ending date of reports should not be more than 3 months prior to submission of requests for extension) together with their requests for project extension. The institutions should exercise their judgement and recommend the justifiable cases to the RGC for consideration.
 - (iii) For extension beyond 12 months (i.e. after approval given at (i) and (ii)), such requests will not be considered except under extraordinary circumstances (e.g. illness of PI), and the maximum allowable extension in aggregate is 18 months. In exceptional circumstances where further extensions beyond 12 months are given by the RGC, such periods will be counted towards the period allowed for preparation and submission of completion reports.
 - (iv) RGC's approval for project extension will not be given to projects awarded with longer-term grants except for cases with very sound justifications.

Monitoring arrangement

Submission of progress and completion reports

25. PIs are required to submit annual progress reports or mid-term progress reports (Form GRF 7) on all on-going projects through their

institutions to the RGC for monitoring. The reporting period and the date of submission of the report to the UGC Secretariat are given in the table below:

| Projects | Report Type | Report End Date | Report Submission Date |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|
| Three-year projects funded in 2007/08 and thereafter | Mid-term progress report | The immediate <u>31 March</u> after the completion of the first 12-month of the project | Three months after the report end date, i.e. <u>30 June</u> |
| Projects other than the above | Annual progress report | The immediate <u>31 December</u> on or after the completion of every 12-month of the project | Three months after the report end date, i.e. <u>31 March</u> |

26. The progress report of an approved project will be reviewed by the responsible RGC Panel member to ensure that the project is proceeding on schedule and that any problems identified are followed up. While the PIs are held responsible for the submission of progress reports, the institutions should put in place an internal monitoring system to ensure the PIs' compliance with all monitoring rules laid down by the RGC.

27. Completion reports (Form GRF 8) should be submitted not later than 9 months after the approved completion date of the project.

28. For projects submitted in the electronic mode to the RGC in the application stage (see paragraph 17 for the periods of submission), submission of progress and completion reports should be made by the PIs via the Electronic System. For projects submitted in paper mode to the RGC in the application stage, submission should be made by PIs in hardcopy via the institutions to the UGC Secretariat. Relevant form can be downloaded from the RGC website and the reports should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat in

duplicate. The layman summary included in the completion reports will be mounted onto the RGC website for public information.

Unsatisfactory, Barely satisfactory and Overdue reports

29. Timely submission of reports is important and reflects on the diligence and ability of the PI in managing a project. If reports remain overdue by the submission deadline, the RGC will consider terminating the projects and rating them as 'Unsatisfactory' for record. All records of RGC funded projects rated "Unsatisfactory" or "Barely Satisfactory", regardless of whether they are for overdue or other reasons, may be taken into account when a PI's new funding application is considered. As a matter of policy, no new grant will be released as long as the PI has any report overdue. Normally, the "Unsatisfactory" and "Barely satisfactory" records would be disregarded by the Panels six years after passing the judgement

30. The project account of an on-going project should be frozen if any progress report is overdue. In this regard, institution should undertake thorough checking on the submission of reports to the RGC, take immediate action to freeze the accounts of projects which have overdue progress reports and notify the UGC Secretariat of the action taken.

31. The UGC / RGC shall have no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or other liabilities arising from the research projects it supports, beyond the funding allocated from the Earmarked Research Grant for those projects.

(C) Collaborative Research Fund

Disbursement arrangement

32. A proportion of the ERG is allocated as Collaborative Research Fund (CRF) to support equipment projects including major research facilities / equipment for collaborative projects and / or for the acquisition of library materials, and group research projects. The grants are awarded via a process of external peer review. Funding approved under the CRF exercise is released to the principal institutions in the form of a one-line vote on a one-off basis, but it can vary depending on individual cases and subject to specific conditions.

Accounting arrangements

Approved scope

33. The conditions governing the remuneration of research support staff, the purchase of equipment, the support for travel / conference grant and the institutional commitment in infrastructure and overheads under the GRF exercise are also applicable to the projects approved under the CRF exercise.

34. For equipment projects including equipment acquisition and library collection, the responsible Project Coordinator (PC) should follow the normal tendering / procurement procedures in force with the institution to complete purchase and installation of the equipment / collection. Where applicable, the PC and the institution should make reference to the vetting procedures established by the Inter-institutional Equipment Committee (IIEC).

On approval of new projects

35. Once a CRF project is approved, satisfactory arrangements should be worked out among the institutions concerned for the ownership and management of the funded equipment / facilities and for meeting recurrent costs. Monitoring Committees may be established by these institutions if they consider necessary.

36. All group research projects must be commenced by 30 June of the following year the latest and the RGC should be notified of the commencement date and any subsequent change.

37. In case a project budget is substantially reduced and the PC does not decline the grant, the PC concerned is required to submit the revised objectives or work programme to the UGC Secretariat before the deadline set using the proforma at Annex C for consideration by the Collaborative Research Fund Sub-Committee. In any event, a PC should only accept a grant when he is satisfied that the funding approved plus other resources available will be sufficient for the completion of the project.

Changes to approved projects

38. All major changes to approved projects require RGC's prior approval.

(a) Change of PC

The PC plays a very important role in steering the course of a project and, for this reason, any request for change of PC will normally not be considered. In the case that a PC has to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, the project concerned should normally be terminated.

(b) Extension of project completion date

The RGC will only approve application for extension in exceptional circumstances where sound justifications can be advanced. As a matter of policy, the RGC normally does not approve an aggregate extension of more than 6 months for a project. For all projects approved in the exercise of 2007/08 and thereafter, the PCs are required to submit up-to-date progress reports (Form CRF 7G) (ending date of progress reports should not be more than 3 months prior to submission of request for extension) together with their request for extension to the RGC for consideration.

Monitoring arrangement

Submission of progress and completion reports

39. PIs are required to submit annual progress reports or mid-term progress reports (Form CRF 7E for equipment projects and Form CRF 7G for group research projects) on all on-going projects through their institutions to the RGC for monitoring. The reporting period and the date of submission of the report to the UGC Secretariat are given in the table below:

| Projects | Report type | Report End Date | Report Submission Date |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| Three-year projects | Mid-term progress report | The immediate <u>30 September</u> after the completion of the first 12-month of the project | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>30 November</u> |
| Projects other than the above | Annual progress report | The immediate <u>30 June</u> on or after the completion of every 12-month of the project | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>31 August</u> |

40. Completion reports (Form CRF 8E for equipment projects and Form CRF 8G for group research projects) should be submitted not later than 9 months after the approved completion date of the project.

(D) Joint Research Schemes

41. Joint research schemes are established in collaboration with research bodies in the Mainland and overseas for promoting research co-operation and exchanges.

(a) National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC)/RGC Joint Research Scheme

Disbursement arrangement

42. The grants awarded are to support collaborating research between the Mainland and Hong Kong. The grants are awarded via a process of external peer review. Funding approved under the NSFC/RGC Joint Research Scheme is released to the Hong Kong PIs via institutions in the form of a one-line vote on a one-off basis.

Accounting arrangements

43. The conditions governing the projects approved under the GRF exercise are also applicable to the projects approved under NSFC/RGC Joint Research Scheme. The grants are solely for use by the Hong Kong PIs and can only be used in Hong Kong, unless otherwise approved by the RGC.

44. The approved projects should normally start within 6 months of the approval and any deferral beyond this period will require prior approval from NSFC / RGC. The project period of both sides should have the same start and end date.

Changes to approved projects

45. All major changes such as revision of project objectives / work programmes, change of PIs / Co-Is require parallel submission of formal requests to the RGC and the NSFC for prior approval.

46. For extension of project completion date not exceeding 6 months in aggregate, applications must first be submitted by the Mainland PIs to the NSFC. Subject to NSFC's approval, the Hong Kong PIs could then submit their requests for extension to their institutions for consideration. The RGC must be notified of the institutional approval prior to the original completion dates of the projects. Where an application for extension exceeding 6 months in aggregate is sought, the Hong Kong PIs must apply with detailed and sound justifications through their institutions to the RGC and NSFC in parallel at least 6 months before the approved project completion date. Granting of request is subject to agreement of both the RGC and the NSFC. As a matter of policy, the RGC and NSFC will not consider requests for extension exceeding 12 months in aggregate.

47. For 3-year projects funded in the exercise of 2007/08 and thereafter, when submitting requests to RGC for further extensions beyond 6-month extensions approved by institutions, the Hong Kong PIs are required to submit up-to-date progress reports (ending date of report should not be more than 3 months prior to submission of request for extension) together with a copy of the latest progress reports submitted to the NSFC by their Mainland partners for consideration.

Monitoring arrangement

48. Both the Hong Kong and Mainland partners are required to report progress of their projects. Hong Kong PIs are required to submit annual progress reports or mid-term progress reports through their institutions to the RGC for monitoring. They should enclose a copy of the latest progress reports submitted to the NSFC by their Mainland partners. The reporting period and the date of submission of the report to the UGC Secretariat are given in the table below:

| Projects | Report type | Report End Date | Report Submission Date |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| Three-year projects | Mid-term progress report | The immediate <u>30 June</u> after the completion of the first 12-month of the project | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>31 August</u> |
| Projects other than the above | Annual progress report | The immediate <u>31 December</u> on or after the completion of every 12-month of the project For projects which starts after 1 January, the report end date should be the immediate 31 December after project commencement | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>28 February</u> |

49. Hong Kong PIs should submit their completion reports together with a copy of the completion report submitted to the NSFC by the Mainland partner, within 9 months after the approved completion date of the projects. All reports must be jointly signed by the collaborators of both places and submitted in the report forms as prescribed by the RGC and the NSFC respectively. For completion reports, the bilingual layman summaries included therein will be mounted onto the RGC website for public information

(b) Germany / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme

Disbursement arrangement

50. The scheme, established in collaboration with the Germany Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), provides travel grants to support and facilitate collaborative research between scholars in Germany and Hong Kong. Funding approved under the Germany / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme is released to the Hong Kong PIs in the form of a one-line vote on a one-off basis.

Accounting arrangements

51. The grant is to meet only the air passage, accommodation and subsistence costs directly related to the proposed exchanges between the two collaborating grant applicants in Germany. They are solely for use by the Hong Kong PIs. Expenditure on equipment, consumables, other project-related expenses and insurances are not covered.

52. Save in very exceptional circumstances (such as prolonged illness of the PI) and with proper justifications stated in the "Travel Plan" of the application form as well as prior approval of the RGC, the PI cannot delegate the trip to his Co-I nor his project team members. The RGC grant should under no circumstances be used to support a student.

53. The travel grants awarded can only be used in the approved funding year which normally runs from 1 January to 31 December. For two-year grants, the unspent balance of the first-year grants cannot be carried over to the second year and should be returned to the RGC within 6 months upon expiry of the related funding period.

Monitoring arrangement

54. An interim report is required to be submitted to the RGC by a stipulated deadline. Hong Kong PIs should submit a Project Report summarizing the work completed to the RGC through the institutions within 6 months after the expiry of the funding period. No postponement of the completion date will be allowed. The unspent balance and a statement of account in the format at Annex B should also be returned to the RGC.

(c) PROCORE-France / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme

55. The scheme is established jointly with the French Consulate in Hong Kong to support collaborative research between the two places. In addition to the provision of travel grants, the scheme also sponsors travel, accommodation and subsistence costs of guest speakers and direct organising costs (e.g. reservation of meeting venue, production of conference / workshop materials) of conference / workshop held in Hong Kong.

56. The rules governing the travel grants under the Germany / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme are also applicable to the projects approved under the PROCORE-France / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme.

(d) Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) / RGC Joint Research scheme

Disbursement arrangement

57. This is a pilot research funding scheme to support social science research collaboration between researchers in the UK and Hong Kong. The rules governing the GRF projects are normally applicable to the projects approved under the ESRC / RGC Joint Research scheme. The RGC grants are solely for use by the Hong Kong PIs.

58. The approved projects should normally start within 6 months of the approval and any deferral beyond this period will require prior approval from ESRC / RGC. The project period of both sides should have the same start and end date.

Changes to approved projects

59. All major changes such as revision of project objectives / work programmes, change of PIs / Co-Is require parallel submission of formal requests to the RGC and the ESRC for prior approval. For extension of project duration not exceeding 6 months in aggregate, the authority is with the institution. The PIs should apply to their institutions direct. The RGC and ESRC must be notified of the extension approved by institutions before the original completion date of the project. For extension beyond 6 months, the rules under the NSFC / RGC Joint Research Scheme mentioned at paragraphs 46 and 47 are also applicable to the projects approved under the ESRC / RGC Joint Research Scheme.

Monitoring arrangement

60. The submission and report end dates of mid-term reports / annual progress reports are stipulated in the announcement of funding results. Hong Kong PIs should follow the dates in preparing their progress reports. They should also submit to the RGC their completion reports, together with a soft copy of the “End of Award Report” submitted by the UK partners, within 9 months after the approved completion date of the projects.

(e) RGC-Fulbright Hong Kong Programme

Disbursement arrangement

61. The Programme is established in collaboration with the US Consulate-General in Hong Kong. The RGC-Fulbright Hong Kong Senior Scholar Programme is launched to support Hong Kong scholars to go to the US to undertake research and teaching work for up to ten months. The RGC-Fullbright Hong Kong Dissertation Research Programme is launched to support PhD students studying in Hong Kong to go to the US to undertake research for up to ten months. The fellowship is a one-off non-accountable grant for the passage and all necessary maintenance cost of the scholars / PhD students. Any unspent balance of the research grant has to be returned to the RGC after completion of the fellowship.

Monitoring arrangement

62. The fellowship recipients are required to submit a report on the fellowship to the Hong Kong-America Centre which administers the programme on behalf of the RGC, for record within three months after completion of the fellowship. Institutions are required to arrange for the return of the pro rata amount to the RGC in case the scholars / PhD students concerned shortens or terminates the approved stay in the US.

(E) Public Policy Research and Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Schemes

Disbursement arrangement

63. The Public Policy Research (PPR) and Strategic Public Policy Research (SPPR) Funding Schemes are administered by the RGC with funds allocated by the Central Policy Unit to promote public policy research in higher education sector. The grants are awarded via a process of external peer review. Funding approved under these two schemes is allocated to institutions, not to individual PIs. They are normally released in one instalment (in July for PPR projects and in January for SPPR projects).

Accounting arrangements

64. The conditions governing the remuneration of research support staff, the purchase of equipment, the support for travel / conference grant and the institutional commitment in infrastructure and overheads under the GRF exercise are also applicable to the projects approved under the PPR and SPPR exercises.

65. The accounting arrangements and the procedures / criteria for granting approval for changes to approved projects under the GRF exercise are largely applicable to the projects approved under PPR and SPPR funding schemes, with the exception of the following:

- (a) PPR projects must commence work within 3 months of announcement of the funding results while SPPR projects must commence work within 6 months of result announcement;
- (b) For PPR projects funded in the 7th Round in 2009/10 and thereafter and SPPR projects funded in 2009/10 and thereafter,

PIs are required to submit essential data via the PPR Electronic System and the SPPR Electronic System;

- (c) All requests for project extension must be submitted via the institutions to the RGC for approval. For PPR projects, a maximum extension of 3 months may be granted in justifiable cases. Unlike GRF projects, PIs of PPR projects are not required to attach up-to-date reports to apply for their extension because the extension involved is not long enough to warrant an additional progress report;
- (d) Like CRF in para. 38 (b), the RGC will only approve application for extension to SPPR projects in exceptional circumstances where sound justifications can be advanced. As a matter of policy, the RGC normally does not approve an aggregate extension of more than 6 months for a project. All PIs are required to submit up-to-date progress reports (Form SPPR 7) (ending date of progress reports should not be more than 3 months prior to submission of request for extension) together with their request for extension to the RGC for consideration.
- (e) The PI plays a very important role in steering the course of a SPPR project and, for this reason, any request for change of PI of SPPR project will normally not be considered. In the case that a PI has to withdraw from the research for whatever reason, the project concerned should normally be terminated; and
- (f) For terminated / completed PPR/SPPR projects, institutions are required to return the balance of the grant together with the statement of accounts to the RGC within 3 months of termination / completion and the concluding report (Form PPR 8A/SPPR8A) of the terminated project should also be submitted within 3 months of termination.

Monitoring arrangement

66. As public policy research has explicit implications on policy development and formulation in Hong Kong, it is expected that some results of

the research should be made available for access by the public before the submission of completion reports. PIs should plan for early release of some results for access by the public midway through the projects. To encourage timely dissemination of the research results for the reference of the Government, PIs are encouraged to pass to the Central Policy Unit (CPU) through the UGC Secretariat a copy of any disseminable output (e.g. working paper, report, journal paper, conference paper, books etc.) as soon as it is available. CPU may circulate these outputs to relevant Bureaux / Departments / statutory bodies of the Government for reference.

67. PIs are required to submit annual progress reports or mid-term progress reports on all on-going projects through their institutions to the RGC for monitoring. The reporting period and the date of submission of the report to the UGC Secretariat are given in the table below:

| PPR Projects | Report Type | Report End Date | Report Submission Date |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|
| Three-year projects funded in June 2008 and thereafter | Mid-term progress report | The immediate <u>31 December</u> after the completion of the first 12-month of the project | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>28 February</u> |
| Projects other than the above | Annual progress report | Projects funded in June exercise: The immediate <u>30 September</u> on or after the completion of every 12-month of the project Projects funded in December exercise: The immediate <u>31 March</u> on or | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>30 November</u> Two months after the report |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|
| | | after the completion of every 12-month of the project | end date, i.e. <u>31 May</u> |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|

| SPPR Projects | Report Type | Report End Date | Report Submission Date |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| Three-year projects | Mid-term progress report | The immediate <u>30 September</u> after the completion of the first 12-month of the project | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>30 November</u> |
| Projects other than the above | Annual progress report | The immediate <u>30 June</u> on or after the completion of every 12-month of the project | Two months after the report end date, i.e. <u>31 August</u> |

68. Completion reports in triplicate (Form PPR 8 for PPR projects and Form SPPR 8 for SPPR projects) should be submitted to the RGC within 3 months and 9 months after the approved completion date of the projects respectively. The completion reports will be forwarded to CPU for retention. CPU may circulate the reports to relevant Bureaux / Departments / statutory bodies of the Government for reference. The layman's summary of completed projects will be mounted on the RGC website for public information.

69. The RGC will assess the completion reports and follow the same arrangements adopted in the GRF exercise in handling reports rated "Unsatisfactory" or "Barely Satisfactory" in the PPR and SPPR funding schemes.

70. The RGC / UGC / CPU shall have no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for expenditure or other liabilities arising from the research projects it supports, beyond the funding allocated from the Public Policy Research / Strategic Public Policy Research for those projects.

Acknowledgement

71. Upon completion of the project, one copy each of any refereed publications together with a list of other publications resulting from the project should be submitted together with the Completion Report to the RGC for record and assessment purpose.

Direct Allocation / General Research Fund / Collaborative Research Fund

72. While the RGC does not claim copyright or other intellectual property right of the output produced, a suitable acknowledgment of the RGC funding should be included in any equipment / facilities purchased and any publication / publicity arising from the work done on a research project funded in whole or in part by the RGC / UGC. The following format of acknowledgment should be used:

“The work described in this paper (or the equipment / facility) was fully / substantially / partially supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. [Institution code][Serial number of 4 digits]/ [year][discipline], e.g. CityU 1401/03H for projects submitted in paper mode to the RGC in the application stage; and [Institution code] [Project No.], e.g. CityU 140109 for projects submitted in electronic mode to the RGC in the application stage)”.

Joint Research Schemes

73. Projects funded by the NSFC / RGC Joint Research Scheme and ESRC / RGC Joint Research Scheme must acknowledge the funding support in all publications and any major equipment/facilities acquired in the course of work as follows:

“This work described in this paper (or the equipment / facility) was fully / substantially / partially supported by a grant from the NSFC (or ESRC) / RGC Joint Research Scheme sponsored by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (or the Economic & Social Research Council) (Project No. N_[Institution’s abbreviation][Institution code] [serial number of 2 digits]/[year], e.g. N_CUHK 413/09)” (or project reference no. assigned by the ESRC).

74. All work / conference / workshop materials arising from the approved projects of the PROCORE-France / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme and the German Academic Exchange Service and the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme should carry, where appropriate, an acknowledgement as follows:

“The work / conference / workshop (delete where appropriate) was supported by a grant from the PROCORE-France / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme sponsored by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong and the Consulate General of France in Hong Kong (Reference No. [F-HK][serial number of 2 digits]/[year][type], e.g. F-HK02/09T”.

or

“The work described in this paper was supported by a grant from the Germany / Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme sponsored by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong and the German Academic Exchange Service of Germany (Reference No. [G_HK][serial of 3 digits]/[year], e.g. G_HK013/09)”.

Public Policy Research / Strategic Public Policy Research

75. The Government and the RGC do not claim copyright of other intellectual property right of the output produced. Nevertheless, a suitable acknowledgment of the funding from the CPU and RGC should be included in any equipment / facilities purchased and any publication / publicity arising from the work done on a research project funded in whole or in part by the CPU / RGC / UGC. The following format of acknowledgment should be used:

“The work described in this paper (or the equipment / facility) was fully / substantially / partially supported by a grant from the Central Policy Unit of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. [Institution Name][Institution Number][Serial Number]-PPR-[Year](for projects funded in 2009/10 (7th Round) and thereafter) or [Round of Exercise] (for projects funded in the 6th Round or therebefore) / - SPPR[Year], e.g. CityU 1001-PPR-09 / CityU 1001-PPR-6)” / CityU 1001-SPPR-09.

UGC Secretariat
October 2009

Annex A

Statement of Accounts for RGC-funded/administered Projects

Institution:

Project Ref:

Name of PI/PC:

Project Title:

| <u>Source of Funding</u> | <u>HK(\$)</u> | <u>HK(\$)</u> | <u>Remarks</u> |
|---|------------------|------------------|--|
| RGC grant | XXX,XXX | | (i) |
| Institution | XXX,XXX | | (ii) |
| Others | <u>XXX,XXX</u> | | (iii) |
| Total Funding | | <u>XXX,XXX</u> | (iv) = (i)+(ii)+(iii) |
| <u>Less Expenditure</u> | | | |
| (a) Staff | (XXX,XXX) | | (v) |
| (b) Relief Teacher (only if applicable) | --- | | (vi) |
| (c) Equipment | (XXX,XXX) | | (vii) |
| (d) General Expenses | (XXX,XXX) | | (viii) |
| (e) Stipends to Research Postgraduate Students | (XXX,XXX) | | (ix) |
| (f) Conference | <u>(XXX,XXX)</u> | | (x) |
| Total Expenditure | | <u>(XXX,XXX)</u> | (xi) = (v)+(vi)+(vii)+(viii)+(ix)+(x) |
| Unspent Balance | | <u>(XXX,XXX)</u> | (xii) = (iv) – (xi) |
| Amount of RGC funding used | (XXX,XXX) | | (xiii) |
| Amount of institution's funding used | (XXX,XXX) | | |
| Amount of other funding used | (XXX,XXX) | | |
| <u>Unspent balance to be returned to the RGC :</u> | | | |
| Project Fund | XXX,XXX | | (xiv) = (i) – (xiii) |
| 15% On-costs | XXX,XXX | | (xv) = (xiv) x 15% |
| Total | | <u>XXX,XXX</u> | (xvi) |

**Projects funded under General Research Fund (for non-Electronic
System projects) /Public Policy Research / Strategic Public Policy
Research Funding Scheme
Request for Change of Principal Investigator**

Project Ref: _____

Project Title: _____

To be completed by the Principal Investigator concerned (*Please use additional sheet if necessary*)

Part 1 - State of progress on the Project

Part 2 – Reasons for Change of Principal Investigator (PI)

Part 3 – Name of Co-Investigator (Co-I) to replace the PI

Name :

Post Title:

Institution:

Part 4- The Co-I's past experience in the research area at issue

Signature of the PI : _____

**Name of PI (in BLOCK
letters) :** _____

Date: _____

Part 5 – Declaration by the co-investigator concerned

I am willing to take up the role of principal investigator of the project (Ref.:) and assume full responsibility for completion of the project. I will be held responsible and be accountable for the management and completion of the project. The final assessment on the project, be it “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”, will apply to me.

Signature of the nominated

Co-I:

Name of Co-I (in BLOCK letters):

Date:

Part 6 – Institutional Endorsement

I confirm that the above request for change of PI is supported by the institution, and the nominated Co-I meets all the RGC eligibility requirements as the PI of RGC-funded projects.

Signature :

Name (in BLOCK letters):

Designation:

Date:

Collaborative Research Fund Project
Application for Revision in Objectives / Work Programme
of Newly Funded Project

Project Number :

Project Title :

Name of PC :

(A) Original Objectives/Work Programme (please list in point form as appropriate)

(B) Revised Objectives/Work Programme (please highlight the parts where revision is made)

(C) Reason(s) for Revision(s) of Objective(s) / Work Programme