

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

PRESTIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP SCHEME **UNDER HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES PANEL (HSSPFS) 2012/2013**

Explanatory Notes (HSSPFS 2) for completing the Application Form

You must read this Explanatory Notes carefully before completing and submitting your application. The RGC may stop processing your application if it does not comply with any of the requirements as set out in the Explanatory Notes.

GENERAL

Objectives of the scheme

The main objective of this scheme is to provide opportunities for outstanding investigators under the disciplines of the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel to be granted with extended time-off and supporting funds for research work and writing.

Eligibility of applicants

Institutions are invited to submit a maximum of 5 nominations under the disciplines of the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel. Eligible applicant should be an academic staff member of a UGC-funded institution with conditions of employment meeting ALL the following requirements:

- (i) having a full-time¹ appointment in the institution proper²;
- (ii) being in Staff Grades from 'A' to 'I'³ as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (i.e. from 'Professor' to 'Assistant Lecturer', see Annex B);
- (iii) being primarily engaged in and spending at least 80% of time in degree or higher degree work at the institution proper; and
- (iv) salary being wholly funded⁴ by the institution proper.

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

- (a) A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the institution on or before the submission deadline of this funding exercise and that their appointments would take effect on or before 1 May 2012.

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

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

³ Excluding polytechnic staff grades.

⁴ Excluding staff members who is receiving income from paid appointments outside the institution proper or who is supported by external research grants.

- (b) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being made in June 2012.

An academic staff member who is engaged in non-degree programmes wholly funded from the General Funds of the institution concerned may also be eligible. Visiting scholars are not eligible for being nominated under the HSSPFS.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, cases of exceptional circumstances may be considered by the RGC on a case-by-case basis. The institution should seek the RGC's special approval for such cases before submitting the application. Awardees of HSSPFS cannot compete again in future exercise.

Application form

- (a) These notes are intended to be read by applicant / related staff of institution before completion and submission of a HSSPFS application. Please note that item numbers under Parts I to III in these notes correspond to those in the application form.
- (b) The form is in 3 parts, Part I : Particulars of the Applicant; Part II : Details of the Research Proposal; and Part III : Institutional Endorsement.
- (c) For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in a language other than English, applicant(s) / institution(s) are required to provide an English version for convenience of international reviewers and panel members.
- (d) In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, applicants must complete the applications in the following standard RGC format. Failure to comply with the following format may lead to disqualification of their applications.

Font : Times New Roman
Font Size : 12 point
Margin : 1-inch all round
Spacing : Single-line spacing

- (e) All sections of the relevant parts should be completed. Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert "NA" or "Nil".
- (f) Applications should be submitted in 15 copies to the UGC Secretariat as the first batch by 31 January 2012.

- (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 application form. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have exceeded the allowable page / word limits in various sections.
- (h) It is the obligation of the applicants to ensure that their respective applications contain sufficient and consistent information for evaluation. Incomplete submission (such as those lacking substantial data / information for evaluation) or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to the disqualification of an application.

ENQUIRIES

- (a) Enquiries about the contents of these Explanatory Notes and other related matters about the HSSPFS should be directed to the Research Offices of the institutions which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding HSSPFS matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the Research Offices of the institutions.
- (b) The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in HSSPFS applications are at Annex A. Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the application form may contact the Research Offices of their own institutions.

PART I PARTICULARS OF THE APPLICANT

[To be completed by the applicant]

- 1 - 10 Applicants should provide their particulars to enable the reviewers and panel members to understand your academic background, track records and current responsibilities.

PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant]

RESEARCH DETAILS

HSSPFS is not only intended to provide time and supporting fund to develop a new research project, but also to build on a research programme that have already been well defined and developed. New project can either be a newly funded project or a new research proposal which does not require project costs but only applicant's time to do extensive research and writing.

2. Impact and objectives of the research project

- (a) 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. 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. On proposals concerning Creative Arts, applicants should ensure that proposals submitted to the RGC should contain research elements which contribute to academic attainments.
- (b) The objectives of the project must be presented in point form and reasons for undertaking the project.

Item 1 should be limited to 800 words.

3. Background of research, research plan and methodology

- (a) State whether work has been / is being carried out by you and/or others on a related subject. Outline previous and alternative approaches to the problem and their deficiencies, 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 maximum of two additional A-4 non-text pages for diagrams, photos, charts and tables etc, if any.
- (d) The page limit in Section 1 - 2 does not include references. All references should be provided in full and include all authors.

4. Workplan

Please outline your timetable for the research project, your proposed duration of the Fellowship and indicate the work to be undertaken during the Fellowship.

5. Outputs to be delivered at the end of the Fellowship

The outputs can be of any form but should be of scholarly work nature and not textbooks and straight forward translation. A wide range of research outputs that will lead to significant advances in knowledge, insights of interest or value to the research community is allowed. They can be publications or other outputs from research conducted prior to the start of the Fellowship. It is the responsibility of the applicants to justify the value and appropriateness of the outputs in the applications.

FUNDING REQUEST

6. Cost and justification

Applicants should state the amount requested and provide justification for all items. The applicants and the institutions should decide on the salaries for the replacement with reference to the level and amount of workload expected and justify them on the application forms. Usually, the salaries for relief teachers taking up purely teaching duties should not exceed the salary of Staff Grade “G” (i.e. Lecturer (U)) of the institutions concerned. A maximum amount of \$1 million per award (covering salary costs for relief teachers and staff, travel, subsistence and dissemination costs) for a period of up to 12 months may be granted.

(i) Relief Teacher

Please state the rank of the relief teacher, the months and costs involved. Relief teachers are meant to relieve the applicants of their major teaching loads or / and administrative burden related to teaching work.

(ii) Other staff

Please state the rank of the staff, the months and costs involved. Other staff are meant to relieve the administrative workload of the applicants.

(iii) Travel

Please state the number of trips required and the cost per trip during the Fellowship.

(iv) Subsistence

Please state the amount of subsistence required during the Fellowship. A ceiling of HK\$900 per day should not be exceeded.

(v) Dissemination of outputs

Please state the costs required for dissemination of outputs delivered at the end of the Fellowship, including publication fee, equipment and materials required for dissemination of outputs.

ANCILLARY INFORMATION

8. Proposed reviewers

The RGC encourages the applicants to nominate external reviewers in their proposals for consideration. Panel members have found that the nominated lists of external reviewers are very helpful in assisting them to identify international peers to evaluate the applications. The nomination of reviewers by the applicant(s) is optional, but is highly encouraged especially the research is a very specialised area. In nominating reviewers, the applicants are required to declare in the application forms their full relationship with the nominated reviewers, for fairness and transparency. Any undeclared relationships that have existed between the applicants and the external reviewers, and subsequently come to the attention of the RGC will be treated most seriously, and may result in disqualification and debarring from applying future UGC / RGC grants. Any conflict or potential conflict of interests should be avoided.

If, for any reason of possible conflict of interest, an applicant wants to exclude a person from reviewing his or her application, he or she should submit the request in writing separately through the respective Research Office setting out the full circumstances and justification. Such request should not be made under any section of HSSPFS(1) which in its entirety will be sent to external reviewers for assessment. In all cases, the RGC reserves the right of final decision on the selection and invitation of external reviewers having regard to the merits involved.

9. Dissemination plan

Applicants should describe how the outputs of the proposed work will be shared.

10. Applicant's undertaking

- (a) For applicants not intending to commit 100% of their time to the Fellowship, please state the teaching and administrative commitments which will continue alongside with the Fellowship.
- (b) Awardees of the Fellowship are required to undertake their continual services in their respective institutions for at least one year upon the completion of the Fellowship.

PART III INSTITUTIONAL ENDORSEMENT

[To be completed by the appropriate authority of the applicant's institution]

1. Staff eligibility requirement

The institution is required to verify that an applicant fully meets the criteria for the Fellowship.

2. Institutional statement

Institutions should indicate their level of support on the applications. Evidence of significant and appropriate institutional support for the applications will be an important criterion in assessing the applications.

3. Institutional undertaking

Institutions are required to confirm their commitment to manage the grants and to release the applicant if the application is successful.

UGC Secretariat
September 2011

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

Purpose of Collection of Information and Personal Data

1. Information and personal data contained in your research grant application are collected for the following purposes:
 - (a) determination of your eligibility, as a staff member of a UGC-funded institution, to apply for a competitive grant from the Research Grants Council (RGC);
 - (b) assessment of the merits of the research proposal which you have submitted for funding support;
 - (c) assisting the RGC subject panels in identifying external reviewers to assess your research proposal; and
 - (d) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by the RGC / UGC in relation to the use of public funds.

Handling of your information and personal data

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

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

4. Applicants should note the following:

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

Physical retention of applications

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

Right of Access to Personal Data

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

Further Information

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

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

Fax: 2845 1183

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STAFF GRADES, Modes and Funding Sources

Academic Grades

Academic, Senior

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

Academic, Junior

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

Academic supporting staff

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

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

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

Non-Academic Grades

Non-academic, Senior

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

Non-academic, Junior

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

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