

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH (SPPR) 2009/10

Explanatory Notes (SPPR 2) for completing the Application Form

You must read this Explanatory Notes carefully before completing and submitting your research proposal. 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

- (a) These notes are intended to be read by applicant(s)/[related staff of] institution(s) before completion and submission of a SPPR application.
- (b) The form is in 3 parts-
 - Part I: Summary of the Research Proposal;
 - Part II: Details of the Research Proposal; and
 - Part III: Institutional Endorsement and Declaration of Research Ethics/Safety.
- (c) *For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in non-English language, applicant(s)/institution(s) are required to provide an English version of the Abstract and Research Details (Objectives, Background of Research and Research Plan and Methodology) 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 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) *When proposals are submitted through the SPPR Electronic System, a project reference number will be automatically generated for each of the proposals for identification purposes. The project reference number should be used and quoted in all future correspondence.*
- (g) *For short-listed proposals, the Secretariat will provide the institution with a CD containing the electronic copies of all the short-listed proposals for your printing of the hard copies. Institutions will be requested to submit 10 hard copies of each short-listed proposal together with the presentation file to the Secretariat by 2 December 2009.*

Strict Enforcement of Page Limit

- (h) 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 reproducing the form. 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 or have abused the purpose of the “Supporting Documents” in Section 17 of Part II of the application form** (*only supporting documents and letters of collaboration for the purpose of research ethics/safety approval are allowed to be attached*). Applicants should not make use of section 17 to supplement the contents of other sections.
- (i) Enquiries about the contents of these Explanatory Notes and other related matters about the SPPR funding exercise **should be directed to the Research Offices of the Institutions** which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding SPPR matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the Research Offices of the Institutions.

PART I SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

Item

- 1 The project title should be informative, but short and concise. For all proposals, the primary and secondary fields of research and codes should be stated clearly under the “Project Title”. The schedules showing the field area descriptions and the corresponding codes are at Annex A(1) to A(4). A maximum of two fields are accepted.

The primary field area/code should be selected from among the list of

areas/codes for Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies Research Proposals. However, the secondary field/area code can be selected from among the list of areas/codes for other disciplines. For example, if a proposal's primary area/code is "Economics (4112)" and the secondary code is "Health Services (1215), it should come under the primary subject area of "Business Studies (H1B) and the secondary subject area of "Medicine, Dentistry & Health (M2)".

1(b)(iii) The application must be related to one of the research themes indicated by the CPU in this funding exercise as listed at Annex of the call circular issued by the Secretary, RGC to Heads of institutions in April 2009. Applicants are required to specify the research theme of the proposed research on SPPR1.

1(c) A standard provision of up to \$12,000 per year for each funded project may be used for travelling in connection with presentation of their work of the project internationally in relevant research areas. The figures provided should be the same as the corresponding total figures stated in Item 10 of Part II on estimated cost.

An additional 15% of the SPPR project grant will be allocated to the institutional management as on-costs. Institutions should use the on-costs to cover indirect costs. They should not be used to purchase personal electronic devices under item 10 of Part II below.

1(d) The applicant(s) is required to indicate the nature of the application being submitted. This is intended to include some additional background about the application for consideration.

1(e) A short abstract of *a maximum of 400 words* comprehensible to a non-specialist *should be typed in the text box*. This should be informative and indicative of the nature of research to be conducted. **One A-4 page of abstract in standard format should be uploaded as pdf file ONLY** *when there are special symbols which the system cannot support. The abstract will be mounted on RGC's webpage for public information if the proposal is funded. The applicant of funded projects will also be required to submit the Chinese version of the abstract for posting on RGC website.*

2(a) Each application should be submitted with **only one applicant nominated as the Principal Investigator (PI)** and no applicant should submit more than one application **in this capacity**. Other joint applicants, if any, will be regarded as Co-investigators (Co-I). Each Co-I should have a clear, distinct and material role. Excessive number of Co-Is should be avoided. Normally, the Council will not entertain requests for the addition of co-investigators to a project after funding is awarded. **A change of**

Principal Investigator (PI) during the period of processing the application, as a rule, will not be approved.

The PI of an RGC project grant must be an academic staff member of 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 **30 June 2009** and that their appointments would take effect on or before **1 November 2009**.
- (b) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible for holding the project at the time the funding is awarded in December 2009 and throughout the whole project period; or
- (c) A visiting scholar should have a full-time employment at the institution proper covering the whole project period.

An academic staff member who is engaged in non-degree programmes which are still funded by the UGC may also apply as PI. Eligible staff in this category must be wholly funded from the General Funds of the institution concerned.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, cases of exceptional nature 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.

To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of PIs, PIs should use the standardized format of names as agreed with respective institutions when submitting all RGC grant applications:

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.

| | PI Surname | PI Other Name * |
|------|------------|-----------------|
| 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(b) To encourage new appointees in an academic or research position to apply under the SPPR exercise, applicants are requested to declare under this section if they are within two years of full-time paid appointment to their first substantive position equivalent to staff grades ‘A’ (Professor) to ‘I’ (Assistant Lecturer) as defined in the CDCF at Annex B in any university (local or overseas) at the time of the submission deadline of this funding exercise, and their proposals should be printed in green-colour paper for easy identification.
- 2(c) This section should summarize the qualifications of the PI and each 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* positions held (*with dates(s)*) & present position (state if applicant is a visiting academic from overseas), previous relevant research work (with dates), publication records including the five most representative publications in the recent five years and five representative publications beyond the recent five years (ten at maximum) and others including research-related prizes and awards, brief description of experience in consultancies, service as a referee in evaluating other grant applications, patents, PhD theses supervised, etc.

Each CV should be limited to one A-4 page in the standard RGC format stated in “d” of “General” above for attached pdf documents or a maximum of 400 words for direct input in the text box. Do not send a full CV or publication list of any of the investigators unless subsequently invited to do so by the RGC.

PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

RESEARCH DETAILS

Item

- 1-3 Details of the proposed research. 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. *Item 1 should be limited to 800 words and items 2 and 3(a) together should not exceed ten A-4 pages in standard RGC format excluding references. Two A-4 non-text pages (for diagrams, photos, charts and tables etc) are allowed to be attached as supporting documents.*

Objectives and long-term impact

- 1 The objectives of the project must be presented in point form and reasons for undertaking the project. 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, and a tentative plan of early release of some results for public access, if any. Given the purpose and nature of the public policy research, it is expected that some results of the research should already be available for access by the public as potential input to the policy formulation before submission of the completion reports. PIs of the projects longer than one year should also plan for early release of some results for access by the public midway through the projects.

Policy implications of the research proposal

- 1(b) Under this funding scheme, a broad definition of “public policy research” is adopted to cover **academic research** that will have **explicit** policy implications **on public policy development in Hong Kong**. To provide information for the evaluation of the proposals on their policy implications, applicants are required to state clearly the explicit policy relevance of the proposals to the public policy development in Hong Kong.

Background of research

- 2 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, key references to relevant research by you and others. For new projects, the reasons for investigation and the relevant findings should be clearly demonstrated. For on-going/continuing 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.

Research plan and methodology

3. Indicate if access to Government or official data and records is critical to the proposed project and/or if approval of access to the related data/records has been/is being sought. If access to Government or official data and records is critical to the proposed project, please attach evidence that the government department(s) or official agency(ies) has/have been approached for approval of access to the related data/records and provide confirmation of such approval on or before 30 October 2009.
 - 3(a) 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.
 - 3(b) *A maximum of two additional A-4 non-text pages for diagrams, photos, charts and tables etc, if any.*
 - 3(c) *Please note that the above page limit in Section 1 - 3(b) does not include references. All references should be provided in full and include all authors.*
- 4(b) In case the proposal is a re-submission or is largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to the UGC / RGC or other funding sources, please revisit the main concerns/suggestions previously expressed by external reviewers if an earlier/similar version of the proposal has been assessed before.
- 4(c) This section allows the applicant to respond to those comments, and explain whether and if so what changes have been incorporated in the latest proposal. Some external reviewers' comments may be more agreeable/disagreeable than others. However, please do not overdo in the case of a rebuttal. The RGC panel(s) and external reviewers (not necessarily the same ones) will make the assessment. Under the existing policy, re-submitted proposals, though submitted and considered in previous exercises, will be treated as fresh applications in peer-review and handled on a par with the other new applications. Although subject panels will take into account the PIs' responses to the assessors' comments fed back in the earlier exercises, the panels are not obliged to invite the same group of

external reviewers.

- 5(b), (c)
& (d)
- It is the responsibility of applicants (both PI and Co-I) to ensure that no double funding from different funding sources will be/have been sought for the same / similar research project. Breach of this rule or failure to declare similarity of proposals may result in disqualification of the application, which will also be taken into account by the RGC as part of the PI's/Co-I's track record when assessing future applications from the same PI/Co-I. The RGC reserves the ultimate right to reject or disqualify future applications in serious cases. *In 5(b), PIs/Co-Is are required to explain the differences of all their applications submitted in the SPPR 2009/10 exercise in the capacity of PIs or Co-Is. In 5(c), it is the RGC to decide whether the proposals / projects are similar. The RGC's judgment is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the PI or the Co-I(s) to declare similarity when there is uncertainty. Unless they (PI or Co-I(s)) believe the proposals / projects are obviously different, they are advised to make the declaration and elaborate the difference in the proposals / projects to avoid misunderstanding. Declaration of similar proposals/projects does not necessarily mean that the proposals concerned will be adversely affected. The Council may still fund the proposals concerned if the PI/Co-I is able to justify the differences of the proposals/projects for separate funding.*
- 6
- Give details of plan of collaboration. In proposals involving more than one investigator, the role and specific task(s) of each individual (including the PI and Co-Is) in the proposed research should be described clearly. If the research involves collaboration with other research team(s) or institution(s), letters of collaboration should be attached as appropriate.

GRANT RECORD OF INVESTIGATORS

- 7(a) Please provide details on the on-going and completed research projects funded from all sources which are undertaken by the **PI (in both capacity as PI and Co-I)** in the past five years. Please attach copies of the original abstracts of the quoted *on-going* projects to the application. *No abstracts are required for completed projects, i.e. with completion reports submitted.*
- 7(b) Please provide details on the on-going and completed research projects funded from all sources which are undertaken by **each Co-I (in only the capacity as PI)** in the past three years. Please attach copies of the original abstracts of the quoted *on-going* projects to the application. *No abstracts are required for completed projects, i.e. with completion reports submitted.*
- 8
- Please include a summary of a maximum of 400 words on the key results and publications in respect of each previously RGC and non-RGC funded project undertaken by the PI and each Co-I, in descending chronological

order, which are relevant to the application.

PROJECT FUNDING

You must read this carefully. 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 institutions which fail to screen out non-compliance applications.

- 9 Maximum duration and funding of each funded project are **five years and \$5 million (including 15% on-costs) respectively.**
- 10 A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. Supporting documents (such as quotations) of **up to two A-4 pages** can be attached if necessary. The estimated costs should not include any 'hidden' costs covered by recurrent block grant expenditure, such as the normal salaries of teaching staff who spend a portion of their time on research, cost of utilities, stationery, etc. They should include only expenditure which would not otherwise be separately incurred. Examples of these are: salaries of Research Assistants specifically employed for this project; purchase of equipment necessary for the investigation but not available in the institution(s). In cases where a particular Research Assistant is employed for several projects, his 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.

Starting from the SPPR 2009/10 exercise, an additional 15% of the SPPR project grant awarded will be allocated to the institutional management as on-costs. Institutions should use the on-costs to cover indirect costs. They should not be used to purchase personal electronic devices under item a(iv) and (v) below.

Item (a)(i)

Please state the number, rank and cost of staff involved. The RGC normally supports research support staff at the RA level. The grant assumes an indicative rate of \$195,800 per annum for RA and \$312,400 per annum for senior RA for this SPPR exercise. These indicative rates are only meant for reference and *will be reviewed in May every year. The RAs / SRAs will be funded at the indicative rates or the rates proposed by the PIs concerned, whichever is lower.* When hiring research assistants, institutions and PIs have the discretion to adopt different rates which are appropriate having regard to the current needs of the research and the prevailing market conditions. **Co-Is are not regarded as staff and must not be remunerated with salaries.** *Academic staff remunerated by any*

UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong must not be paid with honorarium or other form of payments.

Item (a)(ii)

*If a higher grade of supporting staff and/or other personnel is required, detailed justifications should be provided. **Co-Is are not regarded as staff and must not be remunerated with salaries.** Academic staff remunerated by any UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong must not be paid with honorarium or other form of payments.*

Item (a) (iii)

Please state the rank of the relief teacher, the months and costs involved. The RGC agrees in principle to provide, **in cases where there is genuine need**, funding for relief teachers so as to enable the PI to allocate sufficient time for research. Relief teachers engaged for this purpose are meant to relieve the PIs of their day-to-day teaching loads and administrative burden related to teaching work. Nevertheless, the RGC is of the view that it is the primary responsibility of the institutions to put their resources in areas where they would be best used. Hence, **such funding will be provided only exceptionally and upon detailed and sound justifications.** It is not necessary to find a relief teacher with equivalent salary, status and experience as the PI concerned. The relief teacher is also not supposed to take up non-teaching related duties, such as purely administrative work, of the PI. In this connection, **the institutions are requested to confirm that the salaries for the relief teachers proposed by the PIs do not exceed the salary of Staff Grade ‘G’ (i.e. Lecturer (U)) of the institutions concerned.** If the applicant or the institution intends to employ a relief teacher with a salary higher than that for ‘Lecturer (U)’, strong and detailed justification must be provided for consideration by the Sub-Panel.

Item (a)(iv) and (v)

Please itemize all equipment/general expenses. While the RGC may fully or partially fund the approved projects, institutions are expected to provide necessary infrastructural and overhead supports (normal academic equipment, consumables (consumable research materials, however, may be funded by the project grant as necessary), postage, fax, stationery, overseas telephone charges etc.) to funded projects. Institutions may be required by the RGC to confirm the availability of institutional resources prior to their acceptance of an award. This is what the Council means by “institutional commitment”. **For equipment, it should be noted that RGC fund must not be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPod, 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 (e.g. desktop PCs, servers, laptop computers, standard software licence /**

dataset, printers and scanners) known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided in the institutions concerned. The PIs and the institutions must not use RGC grants for the purchase or the use of such equipment. For purchase / subscription of database(s) under general expenses, price quotations should be provided as far as possible. Requests without quotations may not be considered.

Item (a)(vi)

Please use the standard rate of stipends of the institution concerned.

Item (a)(vii)

The RGC encourages researchers to present their work internationally and to exchange information with others in their particular research areas. A provision of HK\$12,000 per year, irrespective of the number of investigators involved in the project, is normally allowed for **each funded project**.

In principle, research grants awarded by the RGC should primarily be used in undertaking research work in Hong Kong, and that any outsourcing amounting to the sub-contracting of research work 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 request on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the merits and justifications provided by the PI in section 11.

10(b)&(c) Please confirm whether or not the requested equipment/research-related software licence is available in the institution. If yes, please explain why such equipment/software cannot be used by the applicant(s).

11&12 Justifications for staff support, equipment and other non-salary items should be adequately given. For staff, the work involved and justifications for the proposed rank and duration should be described. **If a relief teacher is required, the CV of the teacher in one A-4 page should be attached, if available, for consideration by the RGC. In the case of applications for funding for Post-doctoral Fellows, the CV of the post-doc in one A-4 page should also be attached if available.**

For equipment, the following points should be addressed:

- (a) Is the equipment essential to the project?
- (b) Has the department/institution already provided such equipment?
- (c) Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other institutions and what is

the possibility of sharing?

- (d) Cost of equipment - give information supporting the estimates e.g. quotes from suppliers. Items costing over HK\$200,000 and without supporting quotations will **NOT** be considered.

For purchase of equipment at or over \$1 million, the following supplementary information is required* -

- Has the institution already been provided with similar equipment? If yes, please explain the need for the purchase.
- Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other institutions? If yes, please provide the following information regarding the similar equipment in other institutions *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 institutions per year;
 - whether and how it can perform more / less functions and capabilities than the equipment under application;
 - whether there is the practice of shared use of the equipment with other institutions currently and in the past two years; and
 - any other reasons that preclude the shared use of the equipment with other institutions.
- Level of use: please provide the estimated numbers of staff members and / or students expected to use the equipment under application and estimated number of hours per annum of utilization.
Will the equipment be available for use by institutions other than the collaborating institutions under the application? If yes, please state the extent of shared use by other institutions such as the number of hours available for sharing per week.

9 – 12 *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.*

13 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 institution 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 allocation requested.

ANCILLARY INFORMATION

14 This item should be completed in respect of proposal involving safety

hazards, the use of living animal or human subjects including those in social science research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human subjects in a research project, subjects' privacy etc). All proposals involving human subjects MUST obtain ethics approval / exemptions. **Applications should not be submitted unless the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has/have been or is/are being sought.** Grants will not be awarded unless the appropriate approval has been obtained by **30 October 2009**. Please also see notes to Item 2 of Part III below.

- 15 The nomination of reviewers by the applicant(s) is optional, but is highly encouraged especially the research is a very specialised area. If nominations are proposed, **it is the collective responsibility of all applicants involved, i.e. PI and Co-I(s), in a grant application to complete Section 15 accurately and fully. Failure to do so will result in disqualification of the application and possible penalty to the applicants, which will also be taken into account by the RGC as part of the track record of the concerned PI / Co-I(s) when assessing future applications from them in the capacity of PI. The RGC reserves the ultimate right to reject or disqualify future applications in cases of serious infraction.** Any change or update in relationships between investigator(s) and nominated reviewers should also be reported to the RGC by **30 October 2009** when submitting the proposal updates (see the second and third last paragraph of this Explanatory Notes).

The RGC encourages grant applicants to nominate external reviewers in their proposals for consideration by RGC panels. Panel members have found that the nominated lists of external reviewers are very helpful in assisting them to identify international peers to evaluate the proposals. 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 PIs and Co-Is 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 RGC / PPR / SPPR grants.

The PIs must ensure that their nominations of external reviewers are made known to the Co-Is. Otherwise, the Co-Is will not be able to declare relationship with the nominated reviewers as required, and thus may lead to disqualification of the applications and penalties to the parties involved.

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 justifications. Such request should **NOT** be made under any section of SPPR1 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.

DATA ARCHIVE POSSIBILITIES

- 16 Please assess data archive potential and opportunities for data sharing. The extent to which additional weight is given to an application where the applicants are willing to make research data available to others will be considered by the RGC.

- 17 *Only supporting documents and letters for the purposes of collaboration or research ethics/safety approval are allowed.* Applicants should **not** make use of this section to supplement the contents of other sections. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have abused the purpose of this section.

* * * * *

It is the obligation of the PIs to ensure that their respective applications contain sufficient and consistent information for evaluation. Incomplete submission or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to disqualification of application.

**PART III INSTITUTIONAL ENDORSEMENT AND
DECLARATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS/SAFETY APPROVAL**

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

You must read this carefully. The RGC may not process the application if the proposed budget does not comply with the requirements as set out in the Explanatory Notes. The RGC also reserves the right to impose penalty on any institutions which fail to screen out non-compliant applications.

Item

1. The institution should confirm that it has evaluated and given support to the application before submission to the RGC. *The institution is also required to verify that a PI fully meets the criteria for the SPPR grant (see Item 2(a) in Part I of the Explanatory Notes) and to confirm the salary for the relief teacher proposed by the PI not exceeding the salary of Staff Grade 'G' (i.e. Lecturer(U)) of the institution as set out in item 10 of Part II.*

Before giving the various confirmations required, the institution should satisfy itself that the PI is **in all respects** meets the requirements of the RGC and can the project, if funded. The institution is also required to report to the RGC immediately if a PI subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant.

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

For Items (j) to (l), please see the notes for Items 9 -12 in Part II.

2. The institution 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 or the use of living animal or human subjects, including those in social science research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human subjects in a research project, subjects' privacy etc). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the institutions to ascertain if they involve human subjects. If they do, the institutions must give approval/exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by **30 October 2009** as is the case with other ethics approval. If the institution is unable to confirm by

30 October 2009 that the required approval has been obtained, the Council will stop processing the application which will be regarded as being withdrawn.

Both Item 1 and Item 2 of Part III should be completed and submitted by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible person(s) in the institution.

INFORMATION UPDATE

*A brief update of the proposal, if any, should be submitted through the SPPR Electronic System to the UGC Secretariat on or before **30 October 2009**, indicating any significant changes, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the PI and changes in investigator(s), modification of the scope of the project and the budget proposals, personnel, alternative funding obtained, investigator(s)'s relationship with nominated reviewers, etc. It should be emphasized that such update should be confined to the above-said changes, and applicants should **NOT** use the opportunity to revise their proposals substantially. For short-listed proposals, 10 hard copies of the information update should be appended to the original proposals and submitted together with the PowerPoint presentation file to the UGC Secretariat on or before **2 December 2009**.*

*In addition, for those applications still pending approval for ethics/safety or for access to the related government / official data / records, the respective Research Administration Office should confirm such approval on or before **30 October 2009**. 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. However, for proposals which require access to the related government / official data / records, evidence that the government departments or official agencies have given approval for the access must also be submitted on or before **30 October 2009**.*

ENQUIRIES

The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in PPR applications are at Annex C. Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the application form may contact the Research Administration Offices of their own institutions. Institutions' research administrators will seek clarification from the UGC Secretariat where necessary.

* * * * *

UGC Secretariat
April 2009

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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Handling of Information and Personal Data
Contained in SPPR Application

Purpose of Collection of 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 an earmarked 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 (nomination of external reviewer(s) by yourself is not obligatory); 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 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 overseas 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 Council 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. Normally, your research proposal is sent to up to five external reviewers selected by the relevant RGC subject panel. The RGC panel requires a minimum of two external assessments to enable a decision on funding to be made.

4. 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 5 below.

5. It is the policy of the RGC to provide feed-back or comments from all reviewers anonymously to applicants whether or not their applications have been successful in securing funding from the RGC. Where necessary, the RGC will also provide additional comments for inclusion in the feedback to help applicants better understand the comments of external reviewers and/or the RGC panel. The external reviewers' comments and the panel's comments (if any) will be provided automatically to all principal investigators, through their institutions, without request and within 40 days of the RGC's decision on funding of proposals.

6. The results of applications for project grants will be announced in December 2009. Applicants should note the following:

- (a) all proposals will have undergone a very rigorous peer-review process which involves the relevant RGC panels and external assessments 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 subject panels, and the availability of funds, in that particular year);
- (c) the RGC is gradually raising the quality threshold, meaning that only top and higher quality proposals will be "funded"; and
- (d) comments from all external reviewers as well as the supplementary advice of the sub-panel members, if available, on each proposal will be provided to the applicants concerned.

Physical retention of applications

7. Applications not selected for funding by the RGC will not be retained by the Secretariat. They will be destroyed upon conclusion of the grant allocation exercise. 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 of the project upon completion by the RGC, with the assistance of external reviewers where appropriate.

Right of Access to Data

8. Notwithstanding the arrangement described above, nothing in this note will affect your legal right to request access to 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

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

Deputy Secretary
Research Grants Council
7/F Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong

Fax: 2845 1183

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