

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

NSFC / RGC Joint Research Scheme for 2011/12

Explanatory Notes for Completing the Application Form for Formal Proposal

You must read this Explanatory Notes carefully before completing and submitting your formal 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 NSFC / RGC Joint Research Scheme (JRS) application. Applicants should also refer to the Call Circular and Invitation for Applications issued for this exercise on 1 December 2010 for application procedures and other requirement details.
- (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 a language other than English, applicant(s) / institution(s) are required to provide an English version on the Abstract and Research Details (Impact and Objectives, Background of Research, Research Plan and Methodology) in pdf file format.
- (d) In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, applicants must complete the applications in the following standard RGC format.

Font: Times New Roman

Font Size: 12 point

Margin: 1-inch all round

Spacing: Single-line spacing

Failure to comply with the application format and / or the allowable page will lead to disqualification of the proposal.

- (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) Hong Kong applicants of shortlisted proposals should submit their formal proposals in 10 hard copies and 1 soft copy to the UGC Secretariat through the Research Offices (ROs) of their respective institutions by **5:00 p.m. on 3 May 2011**.

- (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 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).
- (h) Information on this formal application form should be consistent with that given in the initial application. If not, the formal application would not be processed further. It is the obligation of the Principal Investigators (PIs) to ensure that their respective applications contain sufficient and consistent information for evaluation. Incomplete submission or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to disqualification of application.

ENQUIRIES

- (i) Enquiries about the contents of these Explanatory Notes and other related matters about the NSFC / RGC JRS should be directed to the Research Offices of the Institutions which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding NSFC / RGC JRS matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the Research Offices of the Institutions.
- (j) The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in applications are at Annex B. 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 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

1. Particulars of the Projects

- (a)(ii)& (b)(i)(ii) The RGC project reference number, project title, focus area and project and field(s) of the formal proposal should be the same as those used for the initial proposal.
- (a)(iii) 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. “New” refers to the research topic which the PI and / or Co-investigators (Co-I(s)) apply for RGC funds for the first

time. “Re-submission” refers to the research topic which the PI and / or Co-I(s) have previously applied for RGC funds but not supported. “On-going” refers to the research topic which the PI and / or Co-I(s) extending work previously funded by the RGC.

- (b)(iii) Please give a maximum of five keywords to characterise the work of the proposal.
- (b)(iv) Projects to be funded from the NSFC / RGC JRS should last for no more than **THREE** years.
- (b)(v)(vi) The grant sought for each project budget should not exceed HK\$900,000 and RMB600,000.

An additional 15% of the RGC 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 Section 3 of Part II below.

- (c) A short abstract of a maximum of 400 words comprehensible to a non-specialist should be given. This should be informative and indicative of the nature of research to be conducted. If a proposal is funded, the “Abstract of Research” (Abstract) will be mounted on the RGC website for public’s information. The applicant will be approached for a Chinese version of the Abstract for public access shortly after the announcement of the funding results, or an English version if the original Abstract is presented in Chinese.

PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

RESEARCH DETAILS

This is the major portion of the proposal. It should be presented clearly and concisely and at the same time be detailed enough to indicate the significance and merits of the proposed research and to permit a meaningful evaluation of the worthiness of the project.

1. Impact and Objectives

(a maximum of 800 words for long-term impact and project objectives)

- (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.

- (b) The objectives of the project and reasons for undertaking the project must be presented in point form.

2. Background of research, research plan and methodology

(a maximum of seven A-4 pages in total for (a) and (b))

- (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 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. 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 above page limit in Sections 1 – 2 does not include references. All references should be provided in full and include all authors.

PROJECT FUNDING

The RGC may not process your application if the proposed budget does not comply with the requirements as set out below. The RGC also reserves the right to impose penalty on any institutions which fail to screen out non-compliant applications.

Permissible items

A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. PIs and Co-Is are not regarded as staff and must not be remunerated with salaries. Engagement of academic staff remunerated by any UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong must not be paid with honorarium or other forms of payment. The estimated costs should not include any 'hidden' costs covered by recurrent block grant expenditure, such as the normal salaries of teaching staff who spend a portion of their time on research, cost of utilities, stationery, etc. They should include only

expenditure which would not otherwise be separately incurred. Examples of these are: salaries of Research Assistants 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.

On -costs

An additional 15% of the RGC 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.

Outsourcing of Research Work

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.

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

3. Cost and justifications

(a)(i)& Staff

(b)(i) Please state the number, rank and cost of staff involved, with justifications for the proposed rank and duration. The RGC normally supports research support staff at the Research Assistant (RA) level, Post-doctoral Fellows or Research Postgraduate Students. If a higher grade of supporting staff and / or other personnel is required, detailed justifications should be provided. The grant assumes an indicative rate of HK\$189,000 per annum for RA and HK\$302,000 per annum for senior RA. These indicative rates are only meant for reference. The rate 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. 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.

(a)(ii)& Equipment

(b)(ii) For equipment, the following points should be addressed:

(i) Is the equipment essential to the project?

- (ii) Has the department / institution already provided such equipment?
- (iii) Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other institutions and what is the possibility of sharing?
- (iv) 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.

While the RGC may fully or partially fund the approved projects, institutions are expected to provide necessary infrastructural and overheads supports (normal academic equipment, consumables postage, fax, stationery and overseas telephone charges) to funded projects. RGC fund must not be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPod, MP3 Players, digital cameras, PDAs and iPad 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. 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 RGC means by “institutional commitment”.

(a)(iii)& General Expenses

- (b)(iii) Research-related Software Licence / Dataset should be procured under general expenses item. For requests for purchase / subscription of database(s), price quotations should be provided as far as possible. Requests without quotations may not be considered. The Institution should not use the RGC Funds to purchase standard software licences / dataset. For services / purchase over HK\$200,000, price quotations must be provided.

The RGC funding will also provide support for reasonable expenses for receiving, and subsistence allowance for, the Mainland collaborators in Hong Kong, and passage for Hong Kong researchers to visit collaborators in the Mainland. For visits made by Hong Kong project team, the city to be visited, number and period of visits, and number of travellers for each trip should be stated and justified. The objective which the visit(s) aimed for should also be stated. For the trips made by the collaborators to Hong Kong, the number of travellers and the duration of stays for each trip should also be clearly stated. The information should be consistent with that appearing in the proposal submitted by the Mainland collaborator.

(a)(iv)& Conference Expenses

(b)(iv) 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.

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

4. Existing facilities and major equipment available for this research project

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

5. Funds secured or to be secured

Other sources of funds can include private donations, awards or grants from other organizations, contract research funds from commercial enterprises, or special allocations made by the 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 total cost of the project in Section 3(a)(v) of Part II.

DECLARATION OF SIMILAR OR RELATED PROPOSALS

6. Re-submission of a proposal not supported previously

(a) 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 bodies, please revisit the main concerns / suggestions previously expressed by external reviewers if an earlier / similar version of the proposal has been assessed before.

(b)&(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, if a rebuttal is offered, it should be scholarly and preferably measured. Under the existing policy, re-submitted proposals, will be treated as fresh applications in peer-review and handled in an identical manner to other new applications. Although subject panels will take into account the PIs' responses to the reviewers' comments, the panels are not obliged to invite the same group of external reviewers.

7. Submission of a new proposal or proposal similar or related to present, pending and completed projects

It is the responsibility of applicants (both PI and Co-I) to ensure that no duplicate funding from all sources will be 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. In 7(a), PIs / Co-Is are required to explain the differences of all their applications submitted in NSFC / RGC JRS 2011/12 in the capacity of PIs or Co-Is if their applications are similar or related. In 7(b) to (d), PIs and Co-Is should declare if the proposal is similar or related to any present, pending and completed projects. It is the RGC to decide whether two proposals / projects are similar. The judgement of the RGC is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the PI or the Co-I(s) to declare similarity when there is uncertainty. The PI and Co-Is 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 RGC may still fund the proposals concerned if the PI / Co-I is able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects for separate funding.

8. Particulars of PIs and Co-Is

- (a) Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the PI and no applicant should submit more than one application in this capacity. A PI of an on-going NSFC / RGC JRS project is not allowed to submit new application unless both collaborative partners have completed the last approved project and the Hong Kong PI has submitted his completion report to the RGC before the initial application deadline. Nevertheless, a PI will not be subject to the above restrictions if he / she only participates as a member of other new funding proposals. Other joint applicants, if any, will be regarded as Co-Is. Each Co-I should have a clear, distinct and material role. Excessive number of Co-Is should be avoided. Save in very exceptional circumstances, the RGC will not entertain requests for the addition of Co-I to a project after the funding award. A change of PI during the period of processing the application will not be approved.

The PI of an RGC project grant must be an academic staff member of an 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 A);
- (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.

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.

PIs falling in the following categories are subject to the following additional requirements besides meeting criteria (i) to (iv) above:

- (i) A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the institution on or before 14 January 2011 and that his / her appointment would take effect on or before 1 August 2011.
- (ii) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being made in October 2011 and for at least the first year of the project's planned duration.
- (iii) A visiting scholar should have a full-time employment with the institution covering at least one year or the expected duration of the project whichever is the longer.

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 these, 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:

	PI Surname	PI Other Name *
e.g.	Chan	Peter Tai-wai
e.g.	Zhong	Ya-ping
e.g.	Robinson	Philip G

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

- (b) This section should summarize the qualifications of both teams' 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 position(s) held (with date(s)) & present position (state if applicant is a visiting academic from overseas), previous relevant research work, publication records including the five most representative publications in the recent five years and five

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

representative publications beyond the recent five years (10 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 or a maximum of 400 words in the standard RGC format stated in (d) of “General” above.

- (c) Please give details of plan of collaboration. The role and specific task(s) of each individual (including the PI and Co-Is) in the proposed research should be described clearly. Letters of collaboration are required to be attached to the application.

GRANT RECORD OF INVESTIGATORS

9. Details of Research Projects

- (a) Please provide details on the on-going research projects funded from all sources which are undertaken by the Hong Kong PI (in both capacity as PI and Co-I).
- (b) Please provide details on the on-going research projects funded from all sources which are undertaken by each Hong Kong Co-I (in only the capacity as PI).

10. Major research output of previously funded projects

Please include a summary of a maximum of 400 words in standard RGC format 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 of the Hong Kong team, in descending chronological order, which are relevant to the application.

ANCILLARY INFORMATION

11. Research ethics / safety approval

It is the responsibility of the institution and the PI to ensure that the research proposal is carefully reviewed for its compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Ethics clearance should be sought for research involving living animals and / or human subjects including social sciences research involving human subjects (e.g. potential physical or psychological harms, discomfort or stress to human participants that a research project might generate, subjects’ privacy etc.). The primary responsibility of seeking the relevant approval and ethics clearance rests with the PI. The PI’s institution is required to complete and sign Part III of this application form to confirm whether the research proposal involves human subjects and certify whether the relevant approval is required and if required, the relevant approval has been given / is being sought.

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 1 August 2011. Please also see the respective notes in Part III below.

If the institution / PI declared that no ethics / safety approval was required but the RGC / Panel has turned out to think otherwise, the related application runs the risk of being disqualified.

12. Proposed reviewers

The RGC encourages grant applicants to nominate external reviewers in their proposals for consideration by the Selection Committee. Committee members have found that the nominated lists of external reviewers are very helpful in assisting them to identify international peers to evaluate the proposals. The nomination of reviewers by the applicant(s) is optional, but is highly encouraged especially when the research is a very specialized 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 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 grants.

It is the collective responsibility of all applicants involved, i.e. PI and Co-I(s), in a grant application to complete Section 12 accurately and fully. 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.

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 RO setting out the full circumstances and justifications. Such request should not be made under any section of the formal application 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.

13. Release of Completion Report and Data archive possibilities

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.

For projects approved in 2010/11 onwards, PIs are required to release the completion reports (of Hong Kong PI, containing abstract in non-technical terms, objectives, research output including the list of conference papers / publications / journals and research findings and contact information of PI) to the public through the RGC website.

PART III INSTITUTIONAL ENDORSEMENT AND DECLARATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY

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

INSTITUTIONAL ENDORSEMENT

Staff eligibility requirement for NSFC / RGC JRS

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 the staff eligibility of the PI as certified in the initial proposal is still correct and valid.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Before giving the various confirmation required, the institution should satisfy itself that the PI in all respects meets the requirements of the RGC and can complete the project, if funded. The institution is also required to report to the RGC immediately if a PI subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant and recommend to the RGC for approval a suitable new PI, if any, to take over / conclude the project.

The institution is required to verify and confirm whether the 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 PI of the RGC grant is to complete the project according to plan and that the training of students should not be used to justify any delay in project completion or unsatisfactory project performance.

(e)(f) For items (e) and (f), please see the notes for Items 3(c) and (d) in part II.

(h) To safeguard the interests of the researcher and the institution, institution bear primary responsibility for prevention, detection of research misconduct, including but not limiting to misusing of funds, data falsification, plagiarism and self-plagiarism. Institution is strongly advised to use anti-plagiarism software before submitting the application to the RGC and

verify if this application has been scanned by anti-plagiarism software in item (h).

RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY APPROVAL

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 sciences research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harms, 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 institution to ascertain if they involve human subjects. If they do, the institution must give approval / exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by **1 August 2011** as is the case with other ethics approval. If the institution is unable to confirm by 1 August 2011 that the required approval has been obtained, the RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.

If the institution / PI declared that no ethics / safety approval was required but the RGC / Panel has turned out to think otherwise, the related application runs the risk of being disqualified.

Part III should be completed and signed by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible person(s) in the institution.

UGC Secretariat
March 2011

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”

Handling of Information and Personal Data
Contained in 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 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. Normally, your research proposal is sent to up to eight external reviewers selected by the relevant RGC subject panel. The RGC selection committee requires a minimum of two external assessments to enable a decision on funding to be made.

Annex B
(2 of 3)

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 comments from all external reviewers anonymously to applicants, whether or not their applications have been successful in securing funding from the RGC upon the announcement of results. Where necessary, the RGC will also provide additional comments for inclusion in the feedback to help applicants better understand the comments of the RGC panel.

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

- (a) all proposals will have undergone a very rigorous peer-review process which involves the relevant selection committee and external assessments which are made up of experts from the local, Mainland 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 selection committee, and the availability of funds, in that particular year); and
- (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 formal proposal will be provided to the Hong Kong applicants concerned through their institutions.

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:

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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