

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

GENERAL RESEARCH FUND (GRF) FOR INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH

Supplementary Notes for Applicants

These notes provide supplementary information, in addition to the Explanatory Notes (GRF2) for completing the Application Form, for applicants of the General Research Fund (GRF) seeking support for individual research.

Objective

2. The existing GRF funding template has been modified to better support research conducted by individual researchers. Through institutional arrangement for period(s) of time-off, academic staff may be released from teaching and administrative duties to concentrate on the proposed research full-time.

General Framework

3. The grant for individual research is open for applications in the fields of Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies (HSSBS) only.

4. Funding for such grants comes from the indicative GRF allocation for the HSSBS panel. The GRF applications for individual research will be considered alongside with other GRF applications by the same subject panel at the same time, and evaluated according to the same criteria. There is no preference for one type of proposal over the other: the principal consideration being the quality of the proposals.

5. Existing GRF holders are eligible to apply for funding support for individual research. Holders of the GRF for individual research are not eligible to hold another GRF for individual research at the same time, although holders of this grant may hold other RGC or non-RGC grants concurrently.

6. This grant enables the Principal Investigator (PI) to take time-off to carry out research in an individual and independent manner, in contrast to the conduct of research through supervision of research staff (e.g., Research Assistants). The PI may collaborate with others so long as individual ownership of a distinctive piece of work can be demonstrated.

7. The time-off is to be achieved:

- (a) normally through re-arrangements of teaching schedule, utilization of summer vacation or entitled sabbatical;
- (b) failing (a) above and with detailed justifications, by recruitment of a relief teacher fully-funded by the RGC during the period of time-off.

8. This grant may also be used to extend the period of research supported by an institutional grant for similar purposes.

9. The research may be performed in or out of Hong Kong as justified by the nature of the research (e.g., location of archives or subject populations). Within a typical project of 24- to 36-months duration, the minimum period for time-off is four consecutive months, and the maximum period is 12 months in total. All (overseas) trip(s) must be completed within the project duration. Applicants should apply for time-off from their respective institutions that suits their schedules and needs of the project.

10. During the time-off the PI is expected to work full-time on the proposed research. He/she should not accept any teaching assignment (invited seminars and public lectures excluded) or undertake any other major research activity.

11. The time-off is intended mainly for field work, site visits, interviews, library or archival research etc. The time-off is not primarily for solitary contemplation or extensive writing, as these activities can take place outside the period of time-off during the project duration.

12. Upon receipt of this grant, the PI should ensure that teaching duties are rearranged or covered by a relief teacher during the approved time-off. Failing that the RGC will withdraw the award.

Points to note in completing the Application Form (GRF1)

13. Before applying for this grant, the PI should approach his/her respective institution to seek an agreement-in-principle on the rearrangement of his/her teaching schedule to allow for the proposed time-off. Failing that, and with legitimate justifications, the PI may apply for funds to support a relief teacher. The RGC, however, would only approve such applications in exceptional circumstances.

14. Under “Research plan and methodology”, include period(s) of the proposed time-off and the expected research activities to be conducted.

15. Under “Estimated cost and resource implication of the whole project”, include only expenses arising directly from the proposed research. Examples of these include: airfare, accommodation and travel per diem of the PI (if out of Hong Kong); hiring of temporary staff (such as local guides, porters or assistants) for on-site work during the period of time-off; relief teacher for the period of the approved time-off; conference attendance (see paragraph 16 below). Expenses covered by recurrent block grant expenditure should not be included.

16. A standard provision of \$12,000 per grant is provided for travelling in connection with attending conference/meetings outside Hong Kong.

17. The budget for engagement of a relief teacher should be included only if

the PI has not been able to reduce his/her teaching duties during the proposed time-off. Also legitimate justifications should be provided. For example applicants should provide explanations on why the proposed time-off could not be arranged with the rescheduling of his/her teaching duties or during the summer vacation, and why recent sabbatical entitlements, if any, have not been used for the purpose of individual research.

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UGC Secretariat

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