

## **RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL**

### **GENERAL RESEARCH FUND (GRF) FOR LONGER TERM RESEARCH**

#### **Notes for Applicants**

##### Background

The RGC does not have a stated funding policy governing the maximum duration of research projects to be funded by the General Research Fund (GRF). In practice, most of the GRF proposals request a three-year duration. Proposals longer than three years are regarded as longer-term research.

2. As the local research base becomes more established, it is in the interest of further development of Hong Kong's research enterprise to see more diversified modes of research support to foster projects of longer duration.

##### Objective

3. The objective of the GRF for longer-term research is to provide a slightly modified funding template to cater for projects with a research objective(s) which can only be realistically achieved in a time span of more than three years. Initially, GRF proposals with a project timeline of four to five years will be considered.

##### Framework of Operation

4. The longer-term grant is administered as part of the annual GRF exercises and is applicable to all disciplines. Proposals applying for the grant are subject to the same GRF peer-review standards and procedures and have to compete for funds alongside with other GRF proposals. In all cases, the principal consideration is the quality of proposals. There is no dedicated budget earmarked for the longer-term grant and necessary funds come from within the GRF budget for the individual RGC subject panels.

##### Application Eligibility

5. GRF proposals for longer-term grant are governed by the same set of eligibility requirements as for other GRF applications. Applicants should note that they are only allowed to hold one longer-term grant at any one time. If a PI already has a longer-term grant, he / she will be eligible to apply for another longer-term grant by the GRF deadline in November provided he / she submits the completion report of his / her existing longer-term project by 30 April in the following year.

##### Evaluation of Proposals

6. Proposals for longer-term grants are considered alongside with other GRF applications by the relevant subject panels using the same review process, and evaluated according to the same set of criteria. There is no preference for any one type of proposal over the other and the principal yardstick is the academic merits of proposals.

7. Since funding for longer-term grants are likely to be larger in size, the RGC would place particular emphasis on the following two aspects:

- (a) the applicant must have the time and capacity to undertake a longer-term project. In this regard, the number of all on-going projects of which an applicant is either a Principal Investigator or a Co-investigator will be carefully taken into account; and
- (b) the applicant must have proven track records in delivering research outputs in the previously RGC-funded projects.

8. The RGC may on the basis of merits adjust the proposed length of research and vary the project budgets when awarding longer-term grants. In such cases, the applicants have the discretion to decline a grant if they do not consider it operationally or financially viable to carry out the projects.

#### Award of Grant

9. The longer-term grant is released in two installments, one on commencement of project and the other upon review of the second progress report by the RGC. The apportioning of the grant between the two installments is decided by the RGC having regard to the budget of the funded project. Release of the second installment is subject to satisfactory progress of the project. For this purpose, the second progress report will be considered by the relevant subject panel and, subject to endorsement, release of funding will be arranged in due course.

10. In the case of unsatisfactory progress or other serious problems identified by the RGC, the Council has the absolute discretion to withhold or postpone the release of the second installment of funding. Where required, the RGC may even terminate the project and request return of the unspent balance.

#### Project Management

11. The RGC stresses the importance of prudent project management and timely completion of projects. This must be particularly emphasized for projects supported with longer term grants, and as a matter of rule, no project extension will be allowed save for cases with good justifications. The PI has to seek the RGC's approval well in advance.

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UGC Secretariat

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