

## **Guidelines for considering the budgets for supported research projects**

### General Principles

The RGC's objective is to fund as many worthy projects as possible within the funds available. Nevertheless, projects of exceptional merit i.e. those ranked 5 and, occasionally, 4.5, should, funds permitting, be funded more fully than other projects. The budgets of all supported projects may need to be trimmed to include essential items only. Care must nevertheless be taken to ensure that the projects remain viable.

2. Project estimates should not include hidden costs already covered by recurrent block grant funding, such as salaries of teaching staff who spend a portion of their time on research, computer time, utility charges, consumables, stationery, etc. Only expenditure which would not otherwise be separately incurred will be considered.

### Eligibility

3. No quotas are set for the applications for the CERG exercise, but only one application is allowed per Principal Investigator. Full-time academic staff of UGC-funded institution proper in Staff Grades A to I as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) who are being primarily engaged in and spending at least 80% of time in degree or higher degree work at the institution proper and whose salaries are wholly funded by the institution proper are eligible to apply for allocations from the CERG. Staff members engaged in non-degree programmes which are still funded by the UGC and whose salaries are wholly funded from the General Funds may also apply. Newly appointed staff members should have formally entered into a contract of service with the institutions on or before end of October when the applications are submitted and that their appointments would take effect on or before 1 May of the next year. Staff members employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being made in June and for at least the first year of the projects' planned duration. Visiting scholars should have full-time employment at the institution proper covering at least one year or the duration of the project whichever is the longer.

### Duration of Projects

4. The RGC does not have a stated funding policy governing the maximum duration of research projects to be funded by the Competitive Earmarked Research Grant (CERG). In practice, CERG proposals are typically funded for two years. 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. For proposal with duration

longer than three years, a special funding template for longer-term research is in place. The objective 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, CERG proposals with a project timeline of four to five years will be considered.

### Equipment

5. The following should not be supported : -
  - (i) standard academic equipment known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided, in the institutions concerned;
  - (ii) equipment not wholly or mainly to be used for the research in question during the project's duration; and
  - (iii) unjustified requests for personal electronic appliances such as digital cameras, personal digital assistants (PDA), MP3 and iPod etc.
6. Consideration could be given, in competition with other project bids, to funding equipment requests to support multiple research projects within the same institution.

### Research Support and Technical Staff

7. Support is generally provided at the lowest level (i.e. Research Assistant). Having regard to the various salary rates and ranges now prevailing in the UGC-funded institutions for their Research Assistants and Senior Research Assistants/Research Fellows etc.. Indicative flat rates of salary per annum for Research Assistant, Senior Research Assistant / Research Associate / Postdoctoral Fellows will be provided by the RGC as a general yardstick in scrutinizing the budget of each proposal.
8. Panels should decide, on the merits of the case presented, on the level and number of research support staff/years to be supported, which should be the minimum practicable. In the case of applications for funding for Post-doctoral Fellows, the CV of the post-doc should be requested.

### Travel and Subsistence

9. Since 1994/95, an amount of \$12,000 per annum has been added to all supported projects, except for exploratory projects of one year duration, for travel and associated expenses in connection with conference attendance.

Others

10.	Consumables Research Material	)	support as necessary
	Printing/Publications	)	
	Page charges	)	should not be supported
	Insurance	)	as not strictly necessary
	Stationery, fax and overseas	)	not supported, should be
	telephone charges	)	met by institutions'
		)	departmental expenses