

Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector

Research Grants Council

7 November 2019

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University Grants Committee

How an Application is Assessed

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Assessment Process



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- Please elaborate on the assessment process above.
- Please emphasize that peer-review mechanism is adopted.
- Please advise that an overall rating at “4” or above will be recommended for funding.

Major Assessment Criteria Faculty Development Scheme (FDS)

1. Objective and research agenda
2. Research design and methodology
3. Feasibility
4. Innovativeness
5. Research impact

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- The objective of FDS is to develop the research capability of individual academics so that they can transfer their research experiences and new knowledge into teaching and learning.
- Please emphasize that merit-based assessment, with academic quality being the primary evaluation criterion, is adopted.
- Please elaborate on each of the assessment criteria listed above.
- For “Research Impact”, it is defined as the demonstrable contributions, beneficial effects, valuable changes or advantages that research qualitatively brings to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life; and that are beyond the academia. It may include social and economic impact and research that translates into products and services, as well as research that aligns with important policy, community and social objectives.

Panel's Observation on FDS

1. Quality of proposals varied across subjects
2. Proposals attempting to generate knowledge beyond current state-of-the-art are preferred
3. Methodology in relation to theoretical framework is important
4. Sufficient samples in proposed research can generate reliable conclusions
5. Reviewers' comments may enhance the quality of re-submissions

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1. The quality of proposals varied across subjects. Comparatively, the submissions under the Humanities and Social Sciences Subject had higher quality. The number of funded proposals under this subject increased significantly.
2. Few proposals attempted to generate knowledge beyond the current state-of-the-art.
3. Principal Investigators (PIs) are advised to pay more attention to the methodology in relation to theoretical framework to ensure that there is no flaw in the research design. The proposals should have sufficient elaboration on the proposed research methodology and also the potential contributions of the research to theory and /or practice.
4. Sample size is a concern of the Panel. The proposed research should include sufficient samples to generate reliable conclusions.
5. There was still room for improvement in the quality of the

re-submitted proposals. PIs are advised to follow the comments of the assessment panel and the reviewers to revise the proposals.

6. You may wish to encourage PIs:

- to engage undergraduate students in FDS projects in order to provide undergraduate students with training opportunity; and apply for related allowance (\$2,500 per month x 10 months)
- to apply for teaching relief in order to relieve them from the heavy teaching load.

Major Assessment Criteria Inter-Institutional Development Scheme (IIDS)

1. Objectives
2. Proposed research related activities
3. Feasibility
4. Impacts

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- The objective of IIDS is to enhance academics' research capability and to keep them abreast of new developments and challenging research topics in relevant fields through the organisation of workshops or short courses on an institutional or joint-institutional basis.
- Intellectual merit is an important assessment criterion.
- Please elaborate on each of the assessment criteria as listed above.

Panel's Observation on IIDS

- Overall quality of proposals was similar to last exercise
- Proposed budgets of proposals were reasonable
- Proposed symposium / workshop should enhance research capacity of institution and foster academic collaboration

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- The overall quality of the proposals was similar to the last round of funding exercise. Comparatively, the submissions under the Business Studies Subject had higher quality.
- The proposed budgets of the proposals were more reasonable when comparing with last year.
- PIs are advised to elaborate in the proposal how the proposed symposium / workshop could enhance the research capacity of the institution and / or foster academic collaboration.

Major Assessment Criteria Institutional Development Scheme (IDS)

Research Infrastructure Grant

1. Long term impact and sustainability
2. Expected deliverables and likelihood of building up research capacity of the institution
3. Feasibility and implementation strategy
4. Financial arrangement

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- Starting from the 2019/20 exercise, the IDS is branched out into two grants, namely the “Research Infrastructure Grant” and the “Collaborative Research Grant”.
- The objective of IDS Research Infrastructure Grant to build up the research capacity of the local self-financing degree-awarding institutions in their strategic areas.
- Please elaborate on each of the assessment criteria as listed above.

Panel's Observation on IDS Research Infrastructure Grant

- Proposed research infrastructure should be related to institutions' strategic areas
- Detailed research themes, focused scope, clear objectives, thorough implementation plans and sufficient justifications for proposed budget items are essential

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- Project teams are advised to elaborate in the proposals how the proposed research infrastructure is related to their institutions' strategic areas. The proposed research infrastructure should not be too specific to a particular discipline. Proposals that aim to conduct research rather than build up research capacity should be submitted under the Collaborative Research Grant.
- The research themes should have enough details and the scope of some proposals could be more focused. The proposals should have clear objectives, detailed implementation plans and sufficient justifications for the proposed budget items.

Panel's Observation on IDS Research Infrastructure Grant (Cont'd)

- Inclusion of relevant expertise in the project team is necessary
- Proposed research centres are expected to create synergy with the existing centres
- Elaborations on how proposed research activities can enhance the research capacity of faculty members are important

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- Project teams are advised to include relevant expertise in the team to carry out the projects. Personnel retainment is important to the sustainability of the projects.
- Some institutions set up different research centres with the support of IDS funding in previous exercises. The project teams are advised to elaborate how the proposed research centres collaborate with the existing centres to create synergy.
- The project teams are advised to articulate the relationship between the proposed research activities and the project objectives, and to explain how these activities could enhance the research capacity of faculty members and how the effectiveness of such activities could be measured.

Major Assessment Criteria Institutional Development Scheme (IDS)

Collaborative Research Grant

1. Academic merit of the proposal
2. Long term goal of the proposal and its potential to develop into an area of strength
3. Opportunities for effective synergy among the participating researchers, research groups and institutions
4. Viability of the proposal
5. Research impact

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- The IDS Collaborative Research Grant encourages collaboration among local self-financing degree-awarding institutions or collaboration across disciplines within an institution.
- Please elaborate on each of the assessment criteria as listed above.

Panel's Observation on IDS Collaborative Research Grant

- Proposals should involve team members from different self-financing institutions and / or members from different disciplines
- Clear strategy and relevant expertise in the team are important
- Elaborations on potential contribution of the study and / or the applicability of the research results are advised
- RGC funding should be used to groom local research talents

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- The Collaborative Research Grant aims to encourage and support collaborative research involving two or more self-financing institutions, and / or group research activities that operate across disciplines within an institution.
- For cross-institutional research proposals, the project team should have at least one eligible Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) from another self-financing institution. For cross-disciplinary research proposals, the research proposal should cover at least two research fields from different subject disciplines.
- Project teams are advised to set out clearly the strategy and include relevant expertise in the team to implement the projects. The project teams are also advised to demonstrate sufficient collaboration or synergy amongst team members.
- Some proposals looked like large scale FDS projects with ambitious scope. Project teams are advised to understand the status-quo of the field of study, both local and abroad, and to benchmark the proposed methodologies against the existing

approaches to ensure that the proposed methodologies could achieve the project objectives. Project teams are also advised to consider and set out in the proposals the potential contribution of the study and / or the applicability of the research results.

- Some proposals involved outsourcing of significant parts of the research work (e.g. field work / survey, data collection and data analysis, etc.). Project teams should be reminded that RGC funding should be used to groom local research talents.

New Arrangements for 2020/21 Exercise

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All RGC Funding Schemes

Provision of “Pathways to Impact Statement” in Applications

- The statement should address the following:
 - a) Who are the potential beneficiaries of the proposed research in the short (1 – 3 years), medium (4 – 10 years) and long term (over 10 years)?
 - b) How will the potential beneficiaries benefit? What will be the objective demonstrable / measurable benefits beyond academia?
 - c) What will be done during and / or after the project to increase the likelihood of achieving the identified benefit and reaching the identified beneficiaries?

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- Based on the successful experience of the Research Impact Fund, the RGC considered that the “Pathways to Impact Statement” is an effective way to incentivise the applicants to articulate how to secure impact, what they propose to do and how they propose to start gathering evidence on impact from the outset. It can also foster a culture of actively thinking about impact as an integrated part of research.
- The RGC decided that starting from the 2020/21 exercise, applicants of RGC’s research funding schemes are required to provide a “Pathways to Impact Statement” in the proposals.

IDS Collaborative Research Grant

Eligibility of Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs)

- Apart from eligible academics of self-financing institutions, academics from UGC-funded universities may take up the role of Co-PI in the project (without any transfer of project grant to the UGC sector)

Provision of Teaching Relief

- In addition to the PC, Co-PIs may also apply for funding support for engaging relief teachers.

Q & A

Thank you