

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong) 2025

Notes to Applicants

(HLCA2)

All applicants should read this Notes to Applicants carefully before completing and submitting your application. The Research Grants Council (RGC) may stop further processing your application if your application is found to be not in compliance with any of the requirements as set out in the Notes to Applicants.

1. The application should be written in English and in plain language, so both experts and non-experts will be able to understand the idea.
2. Applicants must strictly comply with the formatting requirements below. Applications that do not adhere to the requirements may be removed from consideration.

a. Line spacing: Single-line spacing

b. Font: Times New Roman

c. Font size: at least 11 point

d. Margins: 1.27 cm on all sides

3. A project reference to be assigned by the Research Office of the university, in the format of HLCA/x-xxx/25 (i.e. HLCA/[Field Area Code]-[One-digit University Code][Two-digit Serial Number]/25) should be placed on the right top corner of the cover page of each part.
(Example: HLCA/M-101/25)

- i. Field Area Code:
M - Biology and Medicine
B - Business Studies
E - Engineering
H - Humanities and Social Sciences
P - Physical Sciences
- ii. University Code:
1 - City University of Hong Kong
2 - Hong Kong Baptist University
3 - Lingnan University

- 4 - The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- 5 - The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- 6 - The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
- 7 - The University of Hong Kong
- 8 - The Education University of Hong Kong

iii. Serial Number:

It indicates the order of proposal(s) assigned by the Research Office of the university (e.g. 01 to 15).

- 4. 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” respectively.
- 5. The application should be submitted in a single pdf file.
- 6. For applications proceeding to the Subject Matter Review, the UGC Secretariat will invite the shortlisted applicants to provide supplementary information regarding the implementation and methodology within a specified period of time (about three weeks) in May / June 2025. When submitting the supplementary information form, the Principal Investigator (PI) should ensure that the required approval for research ethics, safety and access to Government/ official/ private data and records (except for human research ethics (clinical)) has been obtained.

7. **Eligibility**

Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the PI and no applicant should submit more than one application under the Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong) 2025 in this capacity. Other joint applicants will be regarded as Co- Investigators (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(s) to a project after the funding award.

It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that no duplicate funding from any other sources will be sought for the same / similar research project. Once it is known that a proposal has been awarded funding from other sources, the PI should decide whether he / she will decline the funding from other sources or withdraw his / her application under Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong) 2025.

The PI of an RGC project grant must be an academic staff member of an UGC-funded university with conditions of employment meeting ALL the following requirements:

- (i) having a full-time¹ appointment in the university proper² of UGC-funded universities;
- (ii) being in Staff Grades from “A” to “I”³ as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) (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 work⁴ at the university proper; and
- (iv) salary being wholly funded⁵ by the university proper.

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

- (a) A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the university on or before 1 March 2025 and that his / her appointment would take effect on or before 1 September 2025.
- (b) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being made in September 2025 tentatively and throughout the whole project period; or
- (c) A visiting scholar should have a full-time employment at the university proper covering the whole project period.

An academic staff member who is engaged in non-degree programmes which are still funded by the UGC may also apply and serve as PI. Eligible staff in this category must be wholly funded from the General Funds of the university concerned.

Notwithstanding these, cases of exceptional circumstances may be considered by the RGC on a case-by-case basis. The university should seek the RGC’s special approval for such cases before submitting the application.

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.

⁴ A PI who is / will be seconded to work full-time or part-time at the two Innovation and Technology (I&T) clusters (Health@InnoHK and AIR@InnoHK) at the Hong Kong Science Park is eligible to apply for the Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong) 2025

⁵ Excluding staff member who is receiving income from paid appointments outside the university proper or who is supported by external research grants.

8. **Project abstract** (*Part I of the application form*)

The abstract should be written in plain language, so both experts and non-experts can understand the idea. The abstract will not be considered by assessors in their assessment of the application. However, it may be used by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM) and its other global collaborators / sponsors of the Healthy Longevity Global Competition / RGC to publicly share the applicants' ideas (e.g. on the Healthy Longevity Global Competition websites maintained by National Academy of Sciences / RGC) after competition results are announced. By submitting the application, the applicant authorises, by executing any documents as appropriate, each sponsor of the Healthy Longevity Global Competition (at any phase of the Competition) to use the applicant's name, a summary of application, abstract, and/or names, likeness, and contact information of the applicant in the NAM's or any award sponsor's dissemination efforts related to the Healthy Longevity Global Competition.

9. **Two-page Proposal** (*Part II of the application form*),

Applicants –

- (i) must not include hyperlinks, embedded videos, consist of or include a slide presentation;
- (ii) should follow Part II of the application form and structure the proposal with a Section I and Section II, addressing each of the questions and considerations outlined; and
- (iii) may list up to three key references to literature, theories, and / or evidence to suggest the proposed idea would be effective, to be counted towards the two-page limit.

Information exceeding the two-page limit will not be considered.

10. **Project Funding**

The RGC may not process your application if the proposed budget does not comply with the requirements as set out below.

PIs should include the project costs only (excluding on-costs) in the application. Net amount requested from RGC must be equal to or less than US\$50,000 (approx. HK\$389,000). The RGC also reserves the right to impose penalty on any universities which fail to screen out non-compliant applications.

While RGC may fully or partially fund the approved projects, universities are expected to provide necessary infrastructural and overhead supports such as normal academic equipment, consumables, postage, fax, stationery, reference books and overseas telephone charges to funded

projects.

Permissible items

- A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. PI and Co-Is are not regarded as project staff and their salaries must not be paid from RGC's project fund. Academic staff remunerated by any UGC-funded universities 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 (RA) specifically employed for this project; purchase of equipment necessary for the investigation but not available in the university(ies).
- In cases where a particular RA 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.
- Detailed justification should be provided. Otherwise, the RGC will not consider the request.

Cost and justification (Part IV of the application form)

A. One-line Vote Items (Part IV 9(A) of the application form)

(i) Supporting Staff

Please state the number, rank, duties, duration and cost of staff involved, with justifications for the proposed rank and duration. The RGC normally supports research support staff at the RA level, Post-doctoral Fellows or Research Postgraduate Students. If a higher grade of supporting staff and / or other personnel is required, detailed justification should be provided. The grant assumes an indicative rate which is currently at \$361,000 per annum for RA and \$579,000 per annum for senior RA (SRA). These indicative rates are only meant for reference. The indicative rates will be reviewed regularly by the RGC. The total staff costs supported will then depend on the indicative rates or the rates proposed by the applicants concerned, whichever is lower. In the case of applications for funding for Post-doctoral Fellows, the CV of the post-doc in one page should also be attached if available.

(ii) Equipment

Purchase of equipment is not expected by using the Catalyst Award funded by the RGC. However, if the project team considers it necessary to purchase some equipment for delivery of the research proposal, please justify clearly why the equipment must be purchased following the guidelines below. Normally, the proposed equipment cost should not exceed \$200,000.

Please itemise all equipment expenses. RGC fund must not be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPods, iPad, MP3 Players, digital cameras and PDAs 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 such as desktop PCs, servers, laptop computers, printers and scanners known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided in the universities concerned. Universities may be required by the RGC to confirm the availability of university's resources prior to their acceptance of an award. This is what the RGC means by "university's commitment".

For equipment, the following points should be addressed:

- (1) Why is the equipment essential to the project?
- (2) Has the department / university already provided such equipment?
- (3) Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities and what is the possibility of sharing?
- (4) Provide information supporting the estimated cost of equipment including quotes from suppliers. Items costing over \$200,000 without supporting quotations and detailed justifications will **NOT** be considered.

Please mark respective item number(s) clearly in the quotation(s). The quotation(s) must be submitted together with the application on or before the deadline of submission of applications. No late submission will be accepted.

(iii) Outsourcing Expenses of Research Work Outside Hong Kong

Research grants awarded by the RGC should primarily be used in undertaking research work in Hong Kong by the PIs and their teams in order to train and groom research talents in Hong Kong. It will be legitimate for the PIs to subcontract out a small part of the research work (regardless of geographic locations) only if:

- The proposed activity is a necessary and justified part of the research and is outlined in the proposal for approval;

- The PIs should have identified and possessed a high level of research expertise in their teams when they submit research applications to the RGC. The activity to be subcontracted out, for instance, data collection work, should not be the main intellectual focus of the research project;
- The persons / organisations providing the subcontracting services should be at arm's length with the PIs or their serving universities (for instance, employees, friends, relatives, subsidiary companies, etc. should be avoided) and the procurement should be done in accordance with the university's procedures and guidelines; and
- The PIs or their team members should be involved in monitoring the subcontracting services or the supervision of the subcontracting services.

For subcontracting services or research work to be conducted outside Hong Kong, the PIs have to justify in their proposals to the RGC for approval. The RGC will deal with the matter on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the merits and justification given by the PIs and whether the conditions specified above have been fulfilled. For services / work over \$200,000, price quotations must be provided. Applicants should also provide detailed justification of sample sizes and costs for surveys conducted outside Hong Kong.

(iv) General Expenses

Outsourcing services other than those specified in (iii) above should be included under general expenses. Please itemise all general expenses. For services / purchase over \$200,000, price quotations must be provided. Applicants should also provide detailed justification of sample sizes and costs for surveys conducted in Hong Kong.

(v) Conference Expenses

The RGC encourages researchers to present their work internationally and to exchange information with others in their particular research areas. A provision of up to \$20,000, irrespective of the number of investigators involved in the project, is normally allowed for each funded project.

B. *Earmarked Items (Part IV 9(B) of the application form)*

(vi) High-performance Computing Services

A provision of up to \$100,000 will be allowed for the subscription of high-performance computing services for each funded project. Price quotation should be provided. Requests without quotations may not be considered.

(vii) Research-related Software Licence / Dataset

For requests for purchase / subscription of research-related software licence(s) / dataset(s), price quotations should be provided. Requests without quotation may not be considered. The university should not use the RGC Funds to purchase standard software licences / dataset.

(Part IV 10-12 of the application form)

Please confirm whether or not the requested equipment / high-performance computing services / research-related software licence / dataset is available in the university(ies). If yes, please explain why such related equipment / high-performance computing services / software / dataset cannot be used by the applicant(s).

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

11. Grant Record of Investigator(s) *(Part V of the application form)*

It is the responsibility of applicants (both PI and Co-I(s)) to ensure that no duplicate funding from all sources including the RGC will be sought / has been sought for the same / substantially similar research project. Failure to declare related projects / proposals (irrespective of whether submitted to / funded by UGC / RGC and not limited to those in the past five years) may result in disqualification of the application and debarring from applying future UGC / RGC grants. PI / Co-I(s) are required to:

- declare if the current proposal is related to any proposals pending funding approval / on-going / completed projects; and
- explain the differences between the related projects / proposals and the current proposal.

It is the RGC to make the final decision on whether two proposals / projects are related. The judgement of the RGC is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the PI or the Co-I(s) to declare related proposals / projects when there is uncertainty. The PI and the Co-I(s) are advised to make the declaration and elaborate the difference in the proposals / projects to avoid misunderstanding. Declaration of related proposals / projects does not necessarily mean that the proposals concerned will be adversely affected. The RGC may still fund the proposals concerned if the applicants are able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects for separate funding.

12. Project Monitoring

A completion report with research outcome, expenses and research output should be submitted no later than 12 months after the approved completion date of the project.

13. Enquiries

Enquiries about the contents of the Notes to Applicants and other related matters about the Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong) 2025 should be directed to the Research Offices of the universities which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification.

The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in the Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong) 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 universities.

The RGC is fully committed to the principle of honesty, integrity and fair play in the conduct of its business. To uphold public trust and protect public interest, it is important for all applicants to note and observe the “RGC Code of Conduct” and “Extracts from the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance” at https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/guidelines/code/code_of_conduct.pdf.

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. Others, including “Mod 1”

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Handling of Information and Personal Data
Contained in Healthy Longevity Catalyst Awards (Hong Kong)

Purpose of Collection of Information and Personal 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 university, to apply for a competitive 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 committees / subject panels in identifying reviewers to assess your research proposal;
- (d) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by the RGC / UGC in relation to the use of public funds;
- (e) sharing of data with other government departments / research funding agencies for the avoidance of duplicate funding; and
- (f) for successful projects, such data will be used for project monitoring, promotion, publicity and may also be published on the RGC website.

Handling of your information and personal data

2. Your research proposal including your personal data will be handled with care by the RGC. Staff of the UGC Secretariat, members of the RGC and RGC committees / panels, local and non-local 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 applicants. 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. When the RGC obtains assessments on your research proposal, 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. Reviewers will also be advised of the RGC policy on providing feedback to grant applicants described in paragraph 4 below.

4. Applicants should note the following:

- (a) all proposals will have undergone a very rigorous peer-review process which involves assessments from the relevant RGC committees / panels which are made up of experts from local 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 RGC committees / panels, and the availability of funds, in that particular year);
- (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 reviewers on each proposal (except for conference grants / travel grants / fellowship applications) will be provided anonymously to the applicants concerned through their universities.

Physical retention of applications

5. 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, with the assistance of reviewers where appropriate.

Right of Access to Personal Data

6. Notwithstanding the arrangement described above, nothing in this note will affect your legal right to request access to personal 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) in accordance with the prevailing Government regulations.

Further Information

7. All requests for access to your personal data or correction of your personal data or for information regarding policies and practices and kinds of personal data held by the RGC should be made in writing, by post or by fax, addressed as follows:

Assistant Secretary General (Research) Special Duties 2
Research Grants Council
7/F Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong

Fax: 2845 1183

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