

## RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

### COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR 2026/27

#### INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (IDS) RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

#### Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (IDS(R)2) for Completing the Application Form (IDS(R)1)

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**Preamble: How to use this document**

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

Applicants should also read the Call for Proposals for details of the Institutional Development Scheme (IDS) Research Infrastructure Grant, and also make reference to the “Guidelines on Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangement for the Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector” (SF-DAMA) from the RGC website.

The Guidance Notes is in two parts: SECTION 1 summarises the key information about the scheme while SECTION 2 is structured to mirror the application form sections and provide section-by-section guidance on completion of the application documentation.

Enquiries about the contents of this Guidance Notes and other related matters about the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant funding exercise including appeals and complaints should be directed to the Research Coordinators (RCs) or responsible personnel of the institutions.

The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in applications submitted to the RGC are contained in **Annex**. Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the Application Form may contact the RCs or responsible personnel of their own institutions.

**SECTION 1 – SCHEME OVERVIEW****Scheme Purpose**

1. The IDS Research Infrastructure Grant aims to build up and further enhance the research capacity of local self-financing degree-awarding institutions in their specialist and strategic areas.
2. Local self-financing degree-awarding institutions may make use of the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant not only to set up new research centres, but also enhance their existing research centre(s) of strategic importance to further develop their research capacity. In such cases, the application should –
  - (i) introduce new programmes or research work that build upon the capabilities of existing research centre(s) for further enhancement of the institution’s academic’s rigour and / or enrichment of the institution’s

research portfolio; and

- (ii) align the new programmes or research work with the institution's strategic directions, demonstrating integration and collaboration with existing research centre(s) which lead to enhancement of research capability and more impactful research outcomes.

### **Eligibility**

3. Applicants must be eligible academic staff engaged by one of the following fifteen local self-financing degree-awarding institutions:

<u>Code</u>	<u>Institution</u>
11	Saint Francis University
12	Centennial College
13	Hong Kong Chu Hai College
14	The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
15	Hong Kong Shue Yan University
16	Hong Kong Metropolitan University
17	Tung Wah College
21	HKCT Institute of Higher Education
22	Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education
23	School of Continuing Education, Hong Kong Baptist University
24	School of Professional Education and Executive Development, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
25	Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong
31	Gratia Christian College
41	Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education
51	UOW College Hong Kong

4. The application must be submitted on an institutional basis by the Head of Institution. Each institution is allowed to submit two applications under the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant in each exercise, one each for (i) new / re-submission application involving setting up of new research centre(s) and (ii) application for enhancing existing research centre(s) of strategic importance. For the latter case, the existing research centre(s) should have been completed for three years or more prior to the application deadline (i.e. 2 March 2026).

5. The Team leader, who can be the Project holder himself / herself or any academic staff of the institution, must be a full-time academic staff employed by one of the self-financing degree-awarding institutions specified in paragraph 2 above with at least 80% of time spent on locally-accredited local degree or higher degree work<sup>1</sup>, and has at least a one-year renewable contract with the institution at the time of funding award being made. The Team leader should undertake the key coordinating position of the proposal.
6. There is no eligibility requirement for the Team members. The Team members can be any personnel working in the same or different local self-financing degree-awarding institutions, or the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities, or public / private local or overseas institutions / organisations. Each Team member should have a clear, distinct and substantive role. There is no limit in the number of Team members. However, an excessive number of Team members should be avoided. Save in very exceptional circumstances, the RGC will not entertain requests for the addition of Team members to a project after the funding award.

**Once the application is submitted, change of Project holder / Team leader during the processing period will not be allowed. The Project holder is responsible to report immediately via RC of the institution to the UGC Secretariat any changes in his / her as well as the Team leader's eligibility status.**

### **Scheme Funding Thresholds**

7. Scheme funding limits are in place based on the scale of the institution. The funding ceiling for each project is set with reference to the number of full-time academic staff and full-time students as follows:

No. of full-time academic staff	Funding ceiling (\$m)
≤40	3 (student no ≤50) 6 (student no ≥51)
41-130	8
≥131	14

### **Language and Format for Applications**

8. For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in a language other than English, the applicant(s) / institution(s) are required to

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<sup>1</sup> A Team leader who is / will be seconded to conduct research in a university or a research institute / body / agency in the Chinese Mainland / overseas jurisdiction while retaining his / her full-time appointment and position with his / her parent institution and is still on the payroll of the parent institution is eligible to apply for the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant.

provide an English version on the Abstract and Project Details (Project Objectives; Pathways to Impact Statement and Project Descriptions).

9. In order to ensure consistency and fairness, applicants must complete the applications in the following **standard RGC format**. **Failure to comply with the following format may lead to disqualification of their applications.**

Font: Times New Roman

Font Size: 12 point

Margin: 2.5cm all round

Spacing: Single-line spacing

PDF version: compatible with Adobe Acrobat Readers 5 and should be a text-searchable pdf

10. Applicants may refer to the standard template for application format to check the compliance of their applications with the above standard RGC format. The standard template for application format is available on RGC website at [https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding\\_opport/ids\\_rig/how\\_to\\_apply.html](https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/ids_rig/how_to_apply.html).
11. **All sections should be completed.** Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert “N/A”.

### Generating a Project Reference Number for the Application

12. Before submission, a project reference number should be assigned by the institution for each of the proposals for identification purposes. The format of the reference number is: UGC / Scheme + Institution Code / Year, e.g. UGC/IDS(R)11/26. The project reference number should be used and quoted in all future correspondence.

### Application Timetable

13. The **deadline for submission of application is 2 March 2026 (Monday) 5:00pm.** **Two hard copies (including the original version) and one soft copy of each proposal are required** to be forwarded to the UGC Secretariat through the institution. Institutions are required to submit the soft copy of all applications in one USB memory stick as far as possible in a format specified by the Secretariat. The file size of each proposal is **up to 5MB**, with the file name identical to the project reference number. The content of the soft and hard copies must be **identical**. The application will not be processed if such discrepancies are spotted.
14. In view of substantial amount of data involved, institutions are required to submit the applications together with a summary of critical information (in Excel table) on all the proposals for the funding scheme. The critical

information for each proposal in the Excel table should be identical to the hard copy. The completed critical data file should be forwarded to the Secretariat by email on or before **6 March 2026 (Friday) 5:00pm**.

15. To help reduce the cost of processing and save paper, applicants are urged to keep the length of proposals and attachments to the minimum and to use double-sided printing / photocopying when making copies. It is important that applicants should comply with the page limits specified in various sections of the Application Form. **Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have exceeded the allowable page limits in various sections of the Application Form.**

## Assessment

16. A **Selection Interview** will be conducted with the project team of each shortlisted application under the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant in **mid-August 2026**. To ensure that the funding for the proposed IDS Research Infrastructure Grant projects will be effectively deployed, the project teams are required to complete the one-page summary in **Annex C to IDS(R)1** to report the development on their on-going / completed IDS projects (i.e. those projects granted from 2014/15 to 2018/19 exercises), and / or on-going / completed IDS Research Infrastructure Grant projects (i.e. those projects granted from 2019/20 exercise) if any, and elaborate on whether and how the proposed IDS Research Infrastructure Grant project can create synergy with the on-going / completed project(s), and how the deliverables of the proposed and the on-going / completed project(s) can complement with each other.
17. If the application is shortlisted for the Selection Interview, three members of the project team including the Project holder, Team leader and **one** Team member should attend the interview. If the Project holder carries the role of Team leader, **two** Team members may attend the interview.
18. Institutions should also report in **Annex D to IDS(R)1** the condition / utilisation of all major facilities / equipment previously supported by the IDS / IDS Research Infrastructure Grant to ensure that those items are well managed and utilised during and beyond the project period.
19. Applicants are not allowed to mention anything not related to the research proposal per se in the Application Form (such as describing the funding rules) with a view to **communicating to the reviewers** that the latter should give a certain rating if they intend to support the projects. **Should such act be discovered, the applications concerned will be disqualified.**
20. 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” available at the RGC website ([https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/guidelines/code/code\\_of\\_conduct.pdf](https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/guidelines/code/code_of_conduct.pdf)). Applicants are prohibited to **communicate with the RGC Members and Assessment Panel Members on the applications** submitted with a view to influencing the latter in assessing their applications. **Should such act be discovered, the applications concerned will be disqualified.**

## Information Update

21. A brief update of the proposal, if any, should be submitted to the RGC on or before **18 June 2026**, indicating any essential changes, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the Project holder / Team leader, addition / removal of team member(s), alternative funding obtained, declaration of related proposals, project team’s CVs, research funding secured, grant records, etc. It should be emphasised that such an update should be confined to the above said changes only. Applicants should not use the opportunity to revise their proposals substantially.
22. If an update is provided for ethics / safety approval for an application, or for access to Government / official / private data and records, the applicant or the institution should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before **18 June 2026**. Evidence of approval for access to Government / official / private data and records should also be submitted at this stage. Submission of letters on ethics / safety approval is only required upon the RGC’s request.
23. Other than the specific situations set out, no information update / revision to an application is allowed after submission deadline.

## **SECTION 2 – COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM**

It is the responsibility of the Project holder to ensure that his / her application contains sufficient and consistent information for evaluation. **Incomplete submissions** (such as those lacking substantial data / information for evaluation) **or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to the disqualification of an application.**

### **PART I SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL**

#### **1. Particulars of the Project Holder**

- (a) To ensure accuracy and to facilitate identification of the Project holder, Team leader and Team members of the Project Team, their names on their Hong Kong Identity Cards / passports (where applicable) should be used and entered in the standard RGC format:

	<b>Surname (in capital letters)</b>	<b>Other Names*</b>
e.g.	CHAN	Peter Tai-wai
e.g.	ZHONG	Yaping
e.g.	ROBINSON	Philip

\* First / given name, then Chinese name in English syllables (hyphenated) / middle name, if any; initials should be avoided.

The Project holder must be the Head of Institution himself / herself.

#### **2. Particulars of the Project Team**

- (a) The Team leader, who can be the Project holder or any academic staff of the institution, must meet the eligibility requirements stipulated in the paragraph 5 at Section 1 “Scheme Overview”.

Please provide and indicate, in particular:

- the Open Researcher and Contributor ID Identifier (ORCID iD) of the Team leader and each Team member;
- the average number of hours per week to be spent by the Team leader and each Team member on the proposed project; and
- whether the Team leader and any Team member(s) is / are RGC Committee / Panel Member(s) as at the deadline of the application.

The Team leader and all Team members are required to provide an ORCID iD to facilitate identification of researchers. ORCID iD can be registered for free at <https://orcid.org>.

- (b) If the Team leader is working concurrently on two or more on-going research



projects in any capacity, please elaborate on how the Team leader would be able to take up the additional research work in this proposal while maintaining the research quality. Individual or collaborative research projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) should be included. Team leaders holding the capacity of Principal Investigator (PI), Project holder, Team leader, Project Coordinator (PC), Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), Co-Investigator (Co-I) or collaborator in projects should declare.

- (c) Please summarise the qualifications of the Project holder, Team leader and each Team member who will be involved in the project. The CV(s) to be attached should each have a maximum of two A4 pages and include the following information:

CV

- (i) Name
- (ii) Academic qualifications (with dates in “date/month/year” format and name of awarding universities)
- (iii) Previous academic positions held (with dates in “date/month/year” format)
- (iv) Present academic position (with date(s) in “date/month/year” format)
- (v) Previous relevant research work
- (vi) Other relevant matters such as research-related prizes and awards, brief description of consultancy experience, service as a referee in evaluating other grant applications, patents, PhD theses supervised, etc.

Publications List

- (vii) Section A – Five most representative publications in the recent five years  
Section B – Five representative publications beyond the recent five years with the latest publication entered first

The author list of the publications in the CV should be presented in full and cited exactly as written in the original publication. In particular, the applicant should indicate clearly his / her position especially in the long author list, say author 13 out of 40 for facilitating the Panel’s consideration. **Failure to comply with the above requirements may lead to disqualification of the concerned application.**

- (d) Roles of the Team leader and Team members

The role and specific task(s) of the Team leader and each Team member in the proposed project should be described clearly.

The Project holder is required to confirm that the Team leader and Team member(s) listed in the proposal have explicitly agreed to serve in the project team and a copy of the proposal has been provided to the Team leader and each of the Team members. The Project holder is required to provide documentary proof on the collaboration upon the request of the RGC / UGC Secretariat.

### 3. Particulars of the Project

- (a) The project title should be informative, but short and concise.
- (b) All applicants must indicate the nature of the application being submitted:

Nature	Definition
New	The application which the applicant applies for RGC funds for the first time.
Re-submission	The application which the applicant previously applied for RGC funds but not supported.
Enhancement of Existing Research Centre(s) of Strategic Importance <sup>2</sup>	The application for enhancing existing research centre(s) of strategic importance.

The applicant is required to quote the previous UGC / RGC reference number if the application is a re-submission / enhancement of existing research centre(s) of strategic importance.

- (c) A short abstract of a maximum of one A4 page in standard RGC format on the proposed project should be provided. Please include the RGC Reference No. in the abstract. If a proposal is funded, the applicant will be approached for a Chinese version of the Abstract for public access shortly after the announcement of the funding results, or an English version if the original Abstract is presented in Chinese.
- (d) Please complete the one-page summary of the proposed project in **Annex A to IDS(R)1** to set out all key objectives and major deliverables of the proposal; and where appropriate, elucidate whether and how the proposed project can create synergy with the previously funded IDS projects and how the deliverables of the proposed and the funded projects can complement with each other.

<sup>2</sup> The existing research centre(s) should have been completed for three years or more prior to the application deadline (i.e. 2 March 2026).

- (e) Please complete the implementation timetable in **Annex B to IDS(R)1** to spell out the proposed milestones of the project to facilitate the consideration on the disbursement arrangement if the project is funded. The timetable is limited to a maximum of two A4 pages in standard RGC format.
- (f) Please indicate the duration of the project, which normally last for **no more than three years**. For proposals of equal quality, preference will be given to proposals with higher impact, larger scope and longer duration over with incremental advanced and shorter duration.
- (g) Please indicate the total amount of funding requested. The amount should be consistent with the one quoted under Part III Section 1(a)(viii) of the Application Form.
- (h) The Project holder should provide details where the proposal is a re-submission (submitted to the UGC / RGC before), largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to the UGC / RGC or other funding bodies, or an enhancement of existing research centre(s) of strategic importance. It is the responsibility of the Project holder to declare clearly and honestly whether his / her proposal is a re-submission. The RGC reserves the right to discount the rating of an application for failure to acknowledge that it is a re-submission of a previous application.

#### **4. Information on the Funded IDS Project(s)<sup>#</sup>**

- (a) One-page Summary of Funded IDS Project(s) (**Annex C to IDS(R)1**)

Please give a brief summary on the previous funded IDS / IDS Research Infrastructure Grant project(s), if any, with maximum of one A4 page in standard RGC format for each project.

- (b) Utilisation of Asset Funded by IDS Project (**Annex D to IDS(R)1**)

Please specify the level of utilisation of the funded asset by providing the average usage per month / year. Sharing of resources among institutions is encouraged.

#### **5. Summary of Courses, Staff and Student Number(s) (Annex E to IDS(R)1)**

Please provide the number of courses, academic staff and students of the institution as at 28 February 2026. Information on actual staff grades and

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<sup>#</sup> Funded IDS project(s) refers to the funded project(s) under the Institutional Development Scheme (IDS) from 2014/15 to 2018/19 exercises and the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant starting from 2019/20 exercise onwards.

ranks of the academic staff spending 80% or more of their time on locally-accredited local degree or higher degree work should be provided.

## **PART II     DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

This is the major portion of the proposal. It should be presented clearly and concisely with sufficient details to indicate the significance and merits of the project and to permit a meaningful evaluation of the worthiness of the project.

### **1.            Project Objectives**

Please provide a maximum of two A4 pages outlining in bullet-point form for the Project Objectives. The proposal should develop a programme that supports and/or further enhance research. The proposed programme should fall in the strategic areas of the institution's development plan.

### **2.            Pathways to Impact Statement**

Please provide a maximum of two A4 pages.

The Pathways to Impact Statement shall demonstrate how the research team will realise the “impact” beyond the academia by the findings / outcome of the research proposal and by addressing any associated risks. For the purpose of this section, impact 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. The impacts may occur in any geographical location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

The statement shall address the following:

- (a) Who are the potential beneficiaries of the proposed research in the short (one to three years), medium (four to ten years) and long term (over ten 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?
- (d) What are the potential risks that might adversely affect the achievement of the stated impact and how will such risks be mitigated?

The statement shall be comprehensible to a lay person.

Applicants may find the impact case studies available on the Research

Assessment Exercise 2020 Impact Database (<https://impact.ugc.edu.hk/>) useful reference to understand more about research impact. These case studies demonstrated the impact generated by the underpinning research undertaken from January 2000 to September 2019. For the purpose of this Pathways to Impact Statement, the research team should describe how the research findings arising from this proposal would / could be used, and what the research team and universities would do, in bringing about and achieving future impact beyond academia. It should be noted that research impact may or may not be arising from a single research. Hence, the expected impact as described in the Pathways to Impact Statement may also include findings from other research, but the part to be contributed by this research proposal should be clearly defined.

The Project holder should also state the strategic areas of the institution and how the proposal will help the institution to build and improve the research capacity in its strategic areas in the long run.

### 3. Project Descriptions

Please provide a maximum of five A4 pages covering:

(a) Programme of Activities to Support Research

Proposal on the organisation of Conference / Seminar / Workshop / Exchange Programme or a series of activities that support research. Information including the particular of the activities, programme outline, objective(s), expected outcomes, budget, etc. should be provided.

(b) Asset Purchase and Infrastructure / Physical Research Structure Establishment to Support Research

For proposal on (i) asset purchase (e.g. purchase of research facilities, communal equipment, software licence, dataset), and / or (ii) establishment of research centre / research supporting unit, a “Research Facilities Development / Utilisation Plan” should be included.

The Research Facilities Development / Utilisation Plan should address the following:

- (i) acquisition of major research facilities, or equipment, including major library acquisitions and datasets for research, which cannot otherwise be afforded by one institution and which can be used for collaborative research;
- (ii) importance of the equipment / facilities in building up the research capacity of the institution;

- (iii) availability of such facilities / equipment within / outside the institution; and
- (iv) benefits of leveraging IDS Research Infrastructure Grant funding in negotiations with equipment suppliers comparing with funding available in individual projects.

In addressing the above, the following areas should be covered:

- (i) A complete description of the physical research facilities and / or infrastructure support, communal equipment and research materials, databases, software licences and computing equipment made available for research, including specifications, listing of vendors, quotations, service contract, delivery time, and any other facilities and equipment development plan.
- (ii) State the purpose of the proposed equipment / facilities and identify the key research projects being supported, the possible outcome of the research projects in terms of its relevance, significance and value.
- (iii) The proposed management / maintenance arrangement **during** and **beyond** the project period in respect of the following:
  - Level of use:
    - please provide the estimated number of
      - licence holders (if applicable)
      - staff members expected to use the equipment under application
      - the number of hours of its utilisation and percentage of utilisation (say per month / year as appropriate) per annum
  - Optimal utilisation:
    - please advise on
      - whether staff training will be provided / required for the utilisation of the equipment / facilities
      - the plans for making the equipment / facilities available for users in the UGC / Self-financing sectors
  - Sustainability
    - please advise on how resources will be secured for
      - maintenance
      - upgrading

The following criteria will be adopted when considering the Research Facilities Development / Utilisation Plan:

- (i) the merits of the proposal, its contribution to academic / professional development and potential for application, and benefits to tertiary institutions and Hong Kong;
- (ii) the scope for collaborative research / joint use, and the degree of such usage;
- (iii) plans for maintenance, management and make available to users from UGC-funded universities or other eligible local self-financing degree-awarding institutions;
- (iv) relevancy to this IDS Research Infrastructure Grant proposal;
- (v) any institutional support, including that of the sponsoring / collaborating institutions on the purchase and / or future maintenance / upgrade;
- (vi) the prospect of external funding;
- (vii) maximum value for money; and
- (viii) the availability of similar facilities in Hong Kong.

(c) Support Staff Development Plan

A complete description of administrative and technical supporting staff, and research staff to be employed to support research activities and provide administrative support.

(d) Expected Deliverables of the Project

An elaboration on the expected deliverables of the project; how the deliverables are related to the project objectives and enhance the research capacity of the institution; and what will be the indicator(s) in measuring the effectiveness of the project in enhancing the research capacity of the institution.

Building up a research centre is only a means but not the end of an IDS Research Infrastructure Grant project. Tangible research work arising from the research centre is expected. Applicants are required to clearly articulate in the applications the research work intended to be carried out by the proposed research centre.



#### **4. Re-submission of a Proposal Previously NOT Supported**

- (a) If this application is the same as or similar to the proposal(s) submitted under any UGC / RGC funding schemes but not supported previously, the Project holder should provide a summary of all the previous submissions and re-visit the main concerns / suggestions previously expressed by reviewers if an earlier / similar version of the proposal has been assessed before. The RGC reserves the right to discount the rating of an application for failure to acknowledge that it is a re-submission of a previous application.
- (b) This section allows the applicant to respond to previous comments and explain whether and what changes have been incorporated in the latest proposal. Please ensure that sufficient revisions and improvement based on the comments provided by the Assessment Panel have been made. If a rebuttal is offered, it should be scholarly and measured. Re-submitted proposals will be treated as fresh applications for peer-review and handled in an identical manner to other new applications.

## **PART III PROJECT FUNDING**

Unless otherwise specified, all funding levels stated in the Guidance Notes and the Application Form are in Hong Kong dollars.

### **1. Cost and Justification**

#### **(a) Estimated Cost and Resource Implications**

When preparing the budget plan, it should be made in conjunction with the milestones set out in the Implementation Time-table in **Annex B to IDS(R)1**.

The RGC may not process the application if the proposed budget does not comply with the requirements as set out below. The RGC also reserves the right to impose penalty on any institution which fails to screen out non-compliant applications.

#### **Permissible Items**

A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. Project holder, Team leader and Team members are not regarded as supporting staff and their salaries must not be paid from the RGC's project fund. Academic staff remunerated by the UGC-funded universities in Hong Kong or academic staff of the self-financing degree-awarding institutions eligible for submission of applications under the RGC funding schemes for the local self-financing degree sector must not be paid with honorarium or other form of payments.

The grant provided by the RGC should only be used to cover project expenditure which would not otherwise be separately incurred. Please refer to the funding policy stipulated in the SF-DAMA.

The estimated costs should not include any regular operational costs, 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 directly related to the proposed project.

It is a mandatory requirement for applicants to prepare an itemised project budget, i.e. budget for individual activities listed on the Application Form should be supported by itemised breakdown. Items with cost estimates over HK\$200,000 must be supported by quotations. Applications without the inclusion of itemised breakdown and / or quotations will not be considered. Quotations should also be provided for items with cost estimates slightly below HK\$200,000.

Funds will be disbursed on an annual basis according to the cash flow requirements as stipulated in the approved budget and subject to satisfactory progress of the project.

Institutions are required to follow the RGC's, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)'s and / or the institutional procedures and guidelines, whichever is more stringent, for acquisitions of facilities / equipment / services and for recruitment of supporting staff for projects funded by RGC grants.

(i) Research Support Activities

Please itemise the expenses of each activity. The grant can support the direct cost of organising activities within the institution, or sending academic staff to participate activities organised by other institutions, either local or overseas.

If any overseas travel is required, the grant can support economy class roundtrip air passage by the most direct route, hotel accommodation, and subsistence allowance. The expenses / allowances should follow the RGC's / ICAC's / the institutional procurement procedures and guidelines, whichever is more stringent, and should not exceed the limit set by the institution. Should there be any expenses exceeding the set limit, institutions are required to bear the differences.

The following points should be addressed:

- How can the proposed activities help build up and / or further enhance the research capacity of the institution?
- How can the participants benefit from the proposed activities?
- Has the institution organised / academic staff participated in such activities before? If “yes”, please elaborate on the effectiveness of these activities.
- If the proposed activity requires overseas travel, please state:
  - the reasons why this activity is recommended;
  - the criteria for selecting academic staff to attend and the justifications;
  - if there is / are any similar activity(ies) held in other local institutions?

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. **Late submission will NOT be**

**accepted.**

(ii) Facilities and Equipment

Please itemise all facilities and equipment expenses. The grant can be used to support the acquisition of equipment and / or research materials to facilitate research activities carried out in the institution. The equipment and / or research materials should be shared use by academic staff of the institutions.

RGC funds cannot be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, smart watcher, headphones, tablets, multi-media players, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and digital cameras / video recorders except with sound justification as approved by the RGC. In addition, the institution cannot use this funding for the purchase or use of standard equipment such as desktop PCs, servers, laptop computers, printers, scanners and standard software / software licence / dataset known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided in the institution concerned.

For any funding request for subscription of high-performance computing services, the Project holder should provide explanations on how the item(s) is / are related to the research activities and essential to deliver the research results, and description on how the budget is arithmetically determined, etc.

RGC grants must not be used for construction / building / renovation work.

For purchase of equipment at or **over HK\$2.5 million**, the following supplementary information is required:

- Has the institution already been provided with similar equipment? If yes, please explain the need for the purchase.
- Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other institutions? If yes, please provide the following information regarding such equipment in other institutions as far as possible –
  - › brand / model details and the year of purchase of the equipment;
  - › the number of hours of its utilisation and percentage of utilisation (say per month / year as appropriate);
  - › the estimated number of hours (say per month / year as appropriate) available for use by other institutions per year;
  - › whether and how it can perform more / less functions and capabilities than the equipment under application;
  - › whether there is a practice of shared use of the equipment with other institutions currently and in the past two years; and
  - › any other reasons that preclude the shared use of the equipment

with other institutions.

- Please provide a utilisation plan of the equipment including the following information:
  - Level of use: Please advise the potential users of the equipment, and provide the estimated numbers of users, including staff members and / or students expected to use the equipment under application and the estimated number of hours per annum of utilisation.
  - Plan for share use: Will the equipment be available for use by institutions other than the collaborating institutions under the application? If yes, please advise your plan to promote share use of equipment, (e.g. uploading the information of the equipment on the website) and state the extent of shared use by other institutions (e.g. the number of hours available for sharing per week).
  - Provision of training: Whether training will be provided for the use and / or manning of the equipment.
  - Potential use of the equipment after project completion: Please advise how the equipment can be fully utilised after project completion.

Documents supporting the estimated cost of equipment must be given, e.g. quotations from suppliers. 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. **Late submission will NOT be accepted.**

(iii) Supporting Staff

Please list the post of each staff proposed to be hired. The supporting staff can be a technical / administrative staff. **The post of the staff should reflect the duties performed. The RGC's, ICAC's and institutional guidelines and procedures on recruitment of supporting staff, whichever is more stringent, should be complied with.** The salary / compensation should align with other staff of the same post / rank in the institution. The RGC may require the institutions to provide such information in the Auditors' Report.

The following points should be addressed:

- Why is the staff proposed at such rank?
- Will the staff be a new headcount or redeployed from other

department / office of the institution?

(vii) Auditing Expenses

According to the SF-DAMA, upon completion / termination of a funded project, the institution is required to submit an Auditors' Report and return with the unspent balance, if any. Auditing expense is an allowable item to be included in the budget. The indicative reference rates for auditing expenses are as follows:

Size of Grants	Ceiling for Audit Fee
below \$1M	\$7,000
\$1M to less than \$10M	\$15,000
\$10M or above	\$20,000

(c)-(d) Please confirm whether or not the requested equipment / research-related software licence / dataset is available in the institution. If yes, please explain why such related equipment / software cannot be used by the project team.

(e)-(h) Please confirm whether the proposal is related to on-going / completed projects, or proposals pending funding approval.

It is the responsibility of the **Project holder / Team leader** to ensure that no duplicate funding from all sources including the RGC will be sought / has been sought for the same / substantially similar project. **If the applicant fails to declare related research work in this section, the applicant will be subject to disciplinary action even if the proposal is finally not supported. The application may be disqualified and the applicant may be debarred from applying for future UGC / RGC grants.**

Applicants should declare if the proposal is related to any on-going / completed projects or proposals pending funding approval. Component(s) of programme activities in the proposal that has / have already been funded by other funding schemes, either by the RGC or other funding bodies, should also be highlighted. It is the RGC to make the final decision on whether two proposals / projects are related. The judgment of the RGC is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the applicant to declare related proposals / projects when there is uncertainty. The applicants are advised to make the declaration and to elaborate on the differences between 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

applicant is able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects for separate funding.

**The Project holder / Team leader is responsible to report immediately via RC of the institution to the UGC Secretariat any updates on grants records, including declaration of related projects / proposals.**

## **2. Funds Secured or To Be Secured**

Please provide information on other funds already secured for this proposal. Other sources of funds include private donations, awards or grants from other organisations, contract research funds from commercial enterprises or special allocation made by the institution (including seed funding), etc. It should be noted that the amount secured from other sources should be stated on Part III Section 1(a)(v) of the Application Form and the amount will be deducted from the total cost of the project.

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 non-permissible items unless approval is obtained from the RGC in advance.**

## **PART IV – RESEARCH ETHICS AND OTHER APPROVALS**

### **(a) Research Ethics / Safety Approval**

Please complete the declaration related to ethics and safety approvals. It is the responsibility of the institution and the Project holder to ensure that the research proposal is carefully reviewed for its compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Ethics clearance should be sought for research involving living animals and / or human subjects including social sciences research involving human subjects (e.g. potential physical / psychological harms, discomfort or stress to human participants that a research project might generate, subjects' privacy, etc.). The primary responsibility of seeking the relevant approval and ethics clearance rests with the Project holder. The Project holder is required to complete and sign at Part IV of the Application Form to confirm whether the relevant ethics / safety approval is required and if required, the relevant approval has been given / is being sought.

### **(b) Access to Government / official / private data and records**

Please complete the declaration. It is the responsibility of the institution and the Project holder to ensure that approval has been sought for access to Government / official / private data and records if the related data / records are critical to the research proposal. The primary responsibility of seeking the relevant approval rests with the applicant. The Project holder is required to complete and sign Part IV of the Application Form to confirm whether the relevant approvals are required and if required, the relevant approvals have been given / are being sought.

For both (a) and (b) above, the institution and the Project holder should ensure that such approval will be obtained and provided to the RGC by 18 June 2026. The institution and the Project holder should also note that if such approval is not submitted by the deadline, the RGC will consider the IDS Research Grant application as being withdrawn and will cease processing it. **If the institution / Project holder declared that no approval was required but the RGC / Panel eventually considered otherwise, the application may be disqualified.**

### **(c) Release of Completion Report, Data Archive Possibilities, and Public Access of Publications Resulting from Research Funded by the RGC**

#### **Release of Completion Report**

The institutions are required to release the completion reports (containing abstract in non-technical terms, objectives, research output including the list of conference papers / publications / journals and research findings and contact information of the researchers concerned) to the public through the



RGC website. The institutions should assess data archive potential and opportunities for data sharing. Due additional weight will be given to an application where the applicants are willing to make research data available to others.

Project holders are required to include in the project completion reports the URL links to the institutional repositories or the publishers' websites so that the public could have quick and easy access to the manuscripts or journal articles. Project holders are also encouraged to include in their research completion reports the data repositories where research data of their projects could be accessed and shared, where appropriate.

#### Public Access to Publications Resulting from Research Funded by the RGC

- (i) Upon acceptance of a paper for publication, the Project holder should check whether the publisher already allows (a) full open access to the publisher's version, or (b) the author's depositing a copy of the paper (either the publisher's version or the final accepted manuscript after peer-review) in the institutional repository for open access;
- (ii) if both (i)(a) and (b) above are not allowed, the Project holder should request the publisher to allow him / her to place either version in his / her institutional repository for restricted access immediately upon publication or after an embargo period of up to twelve months if required by the publisher; and
- (iii) subject to the publisher's agreement on (i) or (ii) above, the researcher concerned should deposit a copy of the publication in his / her institutional repository as early as possible but no later than six months after publication or the embargo period, if any.

### **PART V UNDERTAKING OF THE PROJECT HOLDER**

It is the responsibility of the Project holder to ensure that the research activity(ies) / expenditure(s) of the project if funded will be carefully monitored for its / their compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards, including but not limited to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region as well as the terms and conditions laid down by the RGC.

## **PART VI INSTITUTIONAL ENDORSEMENT AND DECLARATIONS** **OF RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY APPROVAL**

**[To be completed by the appropriate authority of the institution]**

### **1. Eligibility Requirement for IDS Research Infrastructure Grant**

The institution should confirm that:

- (a) the institution has evaluated and supported the application before submission to the RGC;
- (b) the Team leader fully meets the eligibility requirement for the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant as stated in Part I Section 2(b) of the Application Form and is not debarred from applying for any UGC / RGC grants;
- (c) the Team leader is / will be seconded to conduct research in a university or a research institute / body / agency in the Chinese Mainland / overseas jurisdiction with effect from the date as stated in the Application Form while retaining his / her full-time appointment and position with his / her parent institution and is still on the payroll of the parent institution;
- (d) the Team leader will have the average number of hours per week as declared in Part I Section 2(a) of the Application Form to supervise the proposed project without prejudice to his / her existing commitment in the research work, teaching and administrative duties;
- (e) the project team will abide by the in-house guidelines, as well as the relevant guidelines as set out by the RGC and the ICAC, whichever is more stringent, regarding procurement of facilities / equipment / services and for recruitment of supporting staff;
- (f) the institution will inform the RGC as soon as there is a change in the Project holder / Team leader and will recommend to the RGC for approval of a suitable new Project holder / Team leader to take over the funded project once it is funded and commenced. The Project holder is required to complete the change request form at SF-DAMA and provide a CV of the new Project holder / Team leader for the RGC's consideration. As a matter of policy, change of Project holder / Team leader will normally not be approved within the first six months of an approved project and during the process of the application. However, change of Project holder / Team leader from the 7<sup>th</sup> month may be considered by the RGC under the circumstances as stipulated in the SF-DAMA. The institution understands that failure in identifying a suitable new Project holder / Team leader or obtaining approval from the RGC for change of Project holder / Team leader will result in termination of the funded project;

- (g) the institution understands that the IDS Research Infrastructure Grant, if given, will be withdrawn if the project does not start within one year of the announcement of funding result. The institution should report to the RGC as soon as possible when the Project holder / Team leader proceeds on no-pay leave / professional leave for a continuous or cumulative period exceeding 183 days within the project period;
- (h) if the project is approved, the institution may need to provide additional funding to ensure that the project can be successfully completed. The institution will also provide necessary infrastructural and overheads supports such as normal academic equipment, consumables, postage, fax, stationery, reference books, overseas telephone charges, etc. to the approved projects where appropriate; and
- (i) the institution will ensure that the research activity(ies) / expenditure(s) of the project if funded will be carefully monitored for its / their compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards, including but not limited to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region as well as the terms and conditions laid down by the RGC.

## 2. **Support to the Project Team**

The institution is required to verify and confirm that:

- (a) the project under this IDS Research Infrastructure Grant application is in line with the role of the institution;
- (b) adequate supervision, facilities and training provisions will be in place if this application is supported by the RGC;
- (c) the Project holder's declaration and reasons in Part III Section 1(c) and (d) are genuine and true; and the Project holder's request, if any, is supported;
- (d) the institution will strictly follow the relevant RGC's guidelines during the whole project period to ensure that the project funding is properly used and will return the funding as requested by the RGC when the project is completed / terminated.

### 3. **Declaration of Research Ethics / Safety Approval and Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records**

#### (a) **Research Ethics / Safety Approval**

The institution should ensure that the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) will be obtained and provided to the RGC by 18 June 2026 in respect of projects involving safety hazards or the use of living animal / human subjects, including those in social sciences research (e.g. potential physical / psychological harm, discomfort / stress to human subjects in a research project, subjects' privacy, etc.). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the institutions to ascertain if ethics and / or safety approval is required. If affirmative, the institutions must grant approval or allow exemption according to their internal ethics / safety guidelines or obtain relevant ethics / safety approval from appropriate authority. **If such approval is not obtained by deadline (18 June 2026), the RGC will regard the application as being withdrawn and will stop further processing it.**

#### (b) **Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records**

The institution should ensure that the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) will be obtained and provided to the RGC by 18 June 2026 in respect of access to data / records that are critical to the proposed research. **If such approval is not obtained by deadline (18 June 2026), the RGC will regard the application as being withdrawn and will stop further processing it.**

For (a) and (b), **if the institution / Project holder declared that no approval was required but the RGC Committee / Panel eventually considered otherwise, the application concerned may be disqualified.**

Part VII of the Application Form should be completed, signed and submitted by the appropriate authority of the institution.

UGC Secretariat  
November 2025

**Annex****Handling of Information and Personal Data  
Contained in RGC Research Funding Application****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 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 panel in identifying external reviewers to assess your research proposal;
  - (d) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by the RGC / University Grants Committee (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 (e.g. CVs) will be handled with care by the RGC. Staff of the UGC Secretariat, members of the RGC and RGC 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. 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. By submitting the proposal, the applicant authorises the RGC to use the applicant’s information, including but not limited to ORCID iD, for data matching with other Government bureaux / departments and relevant parties as well as other research funding agencies.

3. When the RGC obtains external assessments on your research proposal, external 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. External 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 external assessments and the relevant RGC panels / committees which are made up of experts from the 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 panels / committees, 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 external reviewers on each proposal (except for conference grants / travel grants / fellowship applications) will be provided anonymously to the applicants concerned through their institutions.

#### 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 external 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) 3  
University Grants Committee Secretariat  
7/F Shui On Centre  
6-8 Harbour Road  
Wanchai  
Hong Kong

Fax: 2845 1183

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