

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

Research Impact Fund (RIF) 2024/25

**Overview and Guidance Notes (RIF2F) for completing
the Application Form for Full Proposal RIF1F**

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PREAMBLE: HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT AND FURTHER ADVICE

All Research Impact Fund (RIF) applicants and their universities should read this “Overview and Guidance Notes (Guidance Notes) carefully before completing and submitting your full proposal. 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 Guidance Notes.

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.

Enquiries about the contents of this Guidance Notes and other related matters about RIF funding exercise (such as appeals and complaints) should be directed to the Research Offices of your university.

SECTION 1 – SCHEME OVERVIEW

1. Purpose and Objectives of Research Impact Fund

RIF has the following objectives:

- (a) To encourage the local academics to consider and articulate the potential of research to deliver benefit for the wider community; and to encourage more impactful and translational research projects.
- (b) To encourage a greater volume of collaborative research beyond academia (e.g. organisations such as government departments, business sector, industry and research institutes).

2. Applicant Eligibility to Apply

Academic staff members of an UGC-funded university whose conditions of employment meet all the following requirements are eligible for application of RIF as Project Coordinator (PC):

- (i) they have a full-time¹ appointment in the university proper²;
- (ii) they are in Staff Grades from “A” to “I”³ (i.e. from “Professor” to “Assistant Lecturer”);
- (iii) they are primarily engaged in and spending at least 80% of time in degree or higher degree work⁴ at the university proper; and
- (iv) their salary is wholly funded⁵ by the university proper.

The following categories of staff members are subject to the following additional requirements beyond 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 27 February 2024 and that his / her appointment would take effect on or before 1 September 2024.
- (b) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being offered tentatively in December 2024/January 2025 as well as throughout the whole project period;
or

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 Project Coordinator 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; or to conduct research in a university or a research institute / bod / agency in the Mainland / overseas jurisdiction, is still considered eligible to apply for RIF

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

- (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 as PC. Eligible staff in this category must be wholly funded from the General Funds of the institution(s) concerned. This arrangement would continue until such time when the relevant programmes are no longer funded by the UGC. Cases of exceptional circumstances may be considered by RGC on a case-by-case basis. The university should seek RGC's special approval for such cases before submitting the application.

No applicant should be a PC on more than one application to the scheme.

3. Scheme Timetable

Full proposals should be submitted through RGC Electronic System by **21 August 2024**.

Each application should also be submitted in **one hard copy** and **one soft copy** (allowing search function) (with size up to 5MB per proposal saved in a CD / USB flash drive) to the University Grants Committee (UGC) Secretariat through the Research Offices of respective universities by **5:00 p.m. on 28 August 2024**.

For further shortlisted applications to interview, additional hard copies of the proposals should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat through respective Research Offices in **late November 2024**. Universities will be notified of the exact number of copies needed nearer the time.

The PC of the shortlisted full proposals will be invited to attend selection interviews in around early December 2024. The funding decision will be announced in around end December 2024/early January 2025. Universities will be notified of the information nearer the time.

4. Information Update

A brief update of the proposal, if any, should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat on or before **30 September 2024**, indicating any significant changes, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the PC, additional funding obtained, declarations of related proposals / projects, investigator(s)'s CVs, grant records, etc. It should be emphasized that such update should be confined to the above-said changes, and applicants should not use the opportunity to revise their proposals substantially. The information update in hard copy should be appended to the proposals (number of copies required and timing will be confirmed separately) which should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat.

If an update is provided for ethics / safety approval for an application, the respective Research Office should submit the relevant updated data to RGC on or before **30 September 2024**. Submission of letters on ethics / safety approval is however not required at this stage, but such letters, if necessary, may need to be provided upon RGC's request.

If an update is provided for approval for access to Government / official / private data and records for an application, the respective Research Office should submit the relevant updated data to RGC on or before **30 September 2024**. **Evidence of approval should also be submitted at this stage.**

5. Enquiries

Enquiries about the contents of the Guidance Notes and other related matters about RIF 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 RIF's applications are at **Annex A**. 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.

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.

SECTION 2 – COMPLETING THE APPLICATION MATERIALS

Format and font

In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, applicants must complete the applications form and **all pdf documents** in the following standard RGC format.

Font: Times New Roman

Font Size: 12 points

Margin: 2.5 cm all round

Spacing: Single-line spacing

Failure to comply with the format requirements may result in the removal of your application from processing. **Do not exceed the page or word limits for any section.** Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have exceeded the allowable page / word limits of the respective sections or have abused the purpose of the “Supporting Documents” in Section 15 of Part II of the application form (only education plan, technology transfer plan, statement on public policy, letters of collaboration and supporting documents for the purpose of research ethics / safety approval are allowed to be attached. Supplementary materials such as papers, manuscripts, publications or detailed research work are not acceptable). Unless otherwise instructed, applicants should not make use of Section 15 to supplement the contents of other sections.

All sections of the application forms should be completed. Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert “N.A.”

It is the obligation of the PCs to ensure that their respective applications contain sufficient information for evaluation. **Information given at the full proposal should be consistent with that given in the preliminary proposal.** Incomplete submission (such as those lacking substantial data / information for evaluation) or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to disqualification of an application.

Applicants are not allowed to mention anything not related to the research proposal per se in the application form with a view to communicating to RGC / RIF Committee Members / reviewers to influencing the latter in assessing their applications or 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.

PCs should include the project costs only (excluding on-costs) in the application.

Unless otherwise stated, all funding levels stated in the application form are in Hong Kong Dollars.

For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in a language other than English, applicant(s) / university(ies) are required to provide an English version on

the Abstract and Research Details (i.e. Project objectives, Pathway to impact statement, Background of research, Research plan and methodology) in pdf file format.

PART I RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

Applicants should not change the essential information submitted in the corresponding preliminary proposals. Although minor refinements may be made to take into account of the comments of RIF Committee or unanticipated developments in the research field, these changes should be explained and justified in the full proposal. Changes in the composition of key personnel, research objectives, direction, methodology and the collaborative structure will not be permitted without strong justifications. The applicants should submit a request to RGC in writing separately through their respective Research Office, highlighting the proposed changes and providing justification for changes.

1. Information on the Project

- (a)(i) Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the PC and no applicant should submit more than one application in this capacity. Other joint applicants will be regarded as Co-Principal Investigators (Co-PIs). Each Co-PI should have a clear, distinct and material role. Excessive number of Co-PIs should be avoided. Save in very exceptional circumstances, RGC will not entertain requests for the addition of Co-PI(s) to a project after the funding award. After the preliminary proposal is submitted, a change of PC during the period of processing the application will **not be** approved.

To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of PCs, PCs should enter the name as shown on his / her Hong Kong Identity Card / passport (where applicable) and use the standardized format of names for all project team members including responsible persons of organisational partner and collaborator as agreed with respective universities when submitting all RGC grant applications:

	PC Surname	PC Other Name *
e.g.	Chan	Peter Tai-wai
e.g.	Zhong	Yaping
e.g.	Robinson	Philip G

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

The applicant should indicate whether he / she or any of the team members is / are RGC Committee / Panel Member(s) as at the deadline of the

application and provide the number of hours per week to be spent by the PC and each Co-PI on the proposed project.

ORCID is a unique researcher identifier facilitating the identification of researchers with expertise in specific areas. Local applicants in all capacities are required to provide an ORCID iD to facilitate identification of researchers. Non-local academics in the capacity of Co-PIs are encouraged to provide one. ORCID iD can be registered for free at <http://orcid.org>.

For organisational partner, please provide the name and post of the person responsible for the project.

- (a)(ii) Indicate if the PC is within two years of full-time paid appointment to their first substantive position equivalent to staff grades “A” (Professor) to “I” (Assistant Lecturer) as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (CDCF) (see **Annex B**) in any university (local or overseas) at the time of the submission deadline of this funding exercise. If yes, the proposals should be printed in green-colour paper for easy identification.
- (a)(iii) The project title should be informative, but short and concise and should be the same as that used in the preliminary proposal.
- (a)(iv) All applicants must indicate with caution the nature of the application being submitted:
 - “New” refers to the application on research topic which the PC and / or Co-PI(s) applies / apply for RGC funds for the first time.
 - “Re-submission” refers to the application on research topic which the PC and / or Co-PI(s) have previously applied for UGC / RGC funds but not supported.
 - “Renewal” refers to the application on research topic which the PC and / Co-PI(s) extending work previously funded by the UGC / RGC. To qualify for “renewal” funding, the research team must demonstrate that remarkable results have been achieved in their current research and there is a good argument and prospect for further research work to continue in the relevant area. A “renewal” proposal should not constitute any major overlap with research supported by other UGC / RGC grants and should have its own goal and a new or extended research objective.

Applicants should have indicated the nature of the application in the preliminary proposal and should not change the nature of the application in the full proposal.

- (b)(i) The project field(s) in the full proposal should be the same as that used in the preliminary proposal, unless RIF Committee suggests otherwise.

In general, to facilitate the appointment of the right experts to evaluate the proposal, PC should select a specific primary field area as far as possible. If a PC selects a non-specific primary field area, i.e. Others, for his / her proposal, he / she must select a specific secondary area close to the field area of the proposal.

To indicate the cross-disciplinary nature of a proposal, a PC is allowed to select the secondary field area / code from a subject area which is different from that of the primary field area / code. Cross-disciplinary proposals will be evaluated jointly by experts from different subject areas. RGC reserves the authority to decide whether an application is cross-disciplinary or not.

Applicants are required to specify the percentage of relevance of the project to the primary field and secondary field.

- (b)(ii) Please give a maximum of five sets of keywords to characterise the work of the proposal. Applicants normally should not change any of the keywords.
- (b)(iii) Research projects to be funded from RIF should normally last for **36 to 60 months**. The proposed duration should be the same as that in the preliminary proposal.
- (b)(iv) The amounts should match the calculation in 4. Cost and justification under Project Funding. **The amount of funding requested in the full proposal should not exceed that in the preliminary proposal.**
- (c) A short abstract comprehensible to a non-specialist should be provided in one page of PDF document in standard RGC format. If a proposal is funded, the abstract of the research proposal will be uploaded on RGC website for public's information. 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.

PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

RESEARCH DETAILS

This is the major portion of the proposal. It should be presented clearly and concisely and at the same time be detailed enough to indicate the significance and merits of the proposed research and to permit a meaningful evaluation of the worthiness of the project. RGC will not further process the application if insufficient / incomplete information is provided on the application form.

1. Project Objectives

The objectives must adhere to that of the corresponding preliminary proposal. Any changes must be **fully explained and justified** in Section 15 and RGC should be separately notified in writing.

The objectives of the project must be presented in point form.

2. Pathways to Impact Statement

A Pathways to Impact statement should cover:

- (a) A brief outline of the research proposal in layman terms.
- (b) 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)?
- (c) How will the potential beneficiaries benefit? What will be the objective demonstrable / measurable benefits beyond academia?
- (d) What will be done during and / or after the project to increase the likelihood of achieving the identified benefit and reaching the identified beneficiaries?

As RGC will invite lay persons to assess the potential research impact of the proposal based on the Pathways to Impact statement, the statement should be written in a way that is comprehensible to a non-specialist and could be read as a separate document independent of the proposal.

3. Background of Research, Research Plan and Methodology

[A maximum of 10 pages in total in standard RGC format for Sections 3 (a) and (b), excluding the non-text pages in Sections 3(c) and (d) and references in Section 3(e)]

- (a) State whether work has been / is being carried out by you and / or others on a related subject. Outline what motivates you to undertake the proposed research, previous and alternative approaches to the problem and their deficiencies, and list key references to relevant research by you and others. For on-going / continuing projects, the progress made and results achieved during the previous years should be clearly summarized. The summary should be sufficiently detailed to allow an evaluation of the worthiness of the project for continuation of support. For new projects, the reasons for investigation and the relevant findings should be clearly demonstrated.
- (b) A complete description of the research plan and the selected approach to the problem solution should be given. Where appropriate, experiments, tests and required facilities should be described. The relevant scientific principles and techniques on which the problem solution depends should also be presented. Outline uniqueness and justification of the proposed approach with its plan of investigation, giving citation from literature where applicable.
- (c) A maximum of two additional non-text pages for diagrams, photos, charts and tables, etc., if any.
- (d) A one-page Gantt chart showing the research activities should be given.
- (e) The page limit of Sections 3 (a) to (d) does not include references. All references should be provided in full and include all authors.

PROJECT FUNDING

The amount of funding requested in the full proposal should not exceed that in the preliminary proposal. RGC may not process your application if the proposed budget does not comply with the requirements as set out below. Applicants should also note when completing this part of the application, **universities / organisational partner(s) are required to provide partnership / matching funding in monetary terms on a 70% (RGC) (excluding on-costs) / 30% (university / organisational partner(s)) basis for the total cost of project.**

Net amount requested from RGC should range from \$3 million to \$10 million. 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. PC and Co-PIs 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, RGC will not consider the request.

4. Cost and Justification

One-line Vote Items

(a)(A)(i) Supporting Staff

Please state the number, rank, duties, duration and cost of staff involved, with justifications for the proposed rank and duration. 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 rates for RA and Senior RA in the 2024/25 academic year are \$361,000 per annum and \$579,000 per annum respectively. The rates are only meant for reference. The rates will be reviewed regularly by the Council. 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.

(a)(A)(ii) Equipment

Please itemize 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 RGC. In addition, 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 RGC to confirm the availability of university's resources prior to their acceptance of an award. This is what RGC means by "university's commitment".

For equipment, the following points should be addressed:

- (i) Why is the equipment essential to the project?
- (ii) Has the department / university already provided such equipment?
- (iii) Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities and what is the possibility of sharing?
- (iv) Provide information supporting the estimated cost of equipment e.g. quotes from suppliers. Items costing over \$200,000 without supporting quotations 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.

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

- Has the university already been provided with similar equipment? If yes, please explain the need for the purchase.
- Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities? If yes, please provide the following information regarding such equipment in other universities as far as possible:
 - brand / model details and the year of purchase of the equipment;
 - the number of hours of its utilization and percentage of utilization (say per month or per year as appropriate);

- the estimated number of hours (say per month or per year as appropriate) available for use by other universities 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 universities currently and in the past two years; and
 - any other reasons that preclude the shared use of the equipment with other universities.
- Level of use: please provide the estimated number of staff members and / or students expected to use the equipment under application and the estimated number of hours per annum of utilization.
 - Will the equipment be available for use by universities / institutions other than the collaborating universities / institutions under the application? If yes, please state the extent of shared use by other universities / institutions such as the number of hours available for sharing per week.

(a)(A)(iii) Outsourcing Expenses of Research Work Outside Hong Kong

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

- (i) The proposed activity is a necessary and justified part of the research and is outlined in the proposal for approval;
- (ii) The PCs should have identified and possessed a high level of research expertise in their teams when they submit research applications to RGC. The activity to be subcontracted out, for instance, data collection work, should not be the main intellectual focus of the research project;
- (iii) The persons / organizations providing the subcontracting services should be at arm's length with the PCs 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
- (iv) The PCs 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 PCs have to justify in their proposals to RGC / RIF Committee for approval. RGC / RIF Committee will deal with the matter on a case-by-

case basis, having regard to the merits and justification given by the PCs 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.

(a)(A)(iv) General Expenses

Outsourcing services other than those specified in (iii) above should be included under general expenses. Please itemize 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.

(a)(A)(v) Conference Expenses

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 per year, irrespective of the number of investigators involved in the project, is normally allowed for each funded project.

Earmarked Items

(a)(B)(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.

(a)(B)(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 RGC Funds to purchase standard software licences / dataset.

(b) to (d) 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).

5. Existing Facilities and Major Equipment Available for this Research Project

Please elaborate the existing facilities and equipment available for this research project.

6. Funds Secured or to be Secured

Other sources of funds can include private donations, awards or grants from partners, other organisations, contract research funds from commercial enterprises, or special allocations made by the university from the block grant or the indicated grant for equipment, etc. It should be noted that the amount secured from other sources under Section 6(b) of Part II may be deducted from the total cost of the project in Section 4(a) of Part II.

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

7. Brief Curriculum Vitae for Applicants

- (a) This section should summarize the qualifications of the PC and each Co-PI(s) who will be involved in the project. The CVs to be attached should include the following information, as appropriate:

- (i) Name
- (ii) Academic qualifications
- (iii) Previous academic positions held (with dates)
- (iv) Present academic position
- (v) Previous relevant research work
- (vi) Publication records*

Section A - Five most representative publications in recent five years

Section B - Five representative publications beyond the recent five-year period (ten at maximum) with the latest publication entered first.

- (vii) Others: e.g. research-related prizes and awards, brief description of experience in consultancies, service as a referee in evaluating other grant applications, patents, PhD theses supervised, etc.

*Full citation of the publication should be provided. For example: it could be in the format “Author name(s) in the order as presented in the original publication with relevant researcher in bold. ‘Title of Article’ Title of Journal (Year); Volume (Issue): Pages”

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 RIF Committee’s consideration. Failure to comply with the above requirements may lead to disqualification of the concerned application.

Each CV should be limited to two pages.

8. Collaboration Plan

Please give details of the plan of collaboration. The role and specific task(s) of each of the PC and Co-PIs / organisational partners in the proposed research should be described clearly. This section should be limited to one page. If the research involves collaboration with other research team(s) or university(ies) / institution(s), collaboration letters are required to be attached to the application at Section 15.

9. Applicants' Experience in Collaboration beyond Academia

Applicants should describe the experience, if any, of the PC and each Co-PI in collaboration beyond academia. A maximum of 250 words per person is allowed.

DECLARATION OF TIME COMMITMENTS, RELATED PROPOSALS & GRANT RECORD

10. Declaration of Time Commitments

The PC is required to provide the numbers of

- (i) on-going individual research projects currently held by him / her in any capacity (e.g. Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator (Co-I), Collaborator, etc.); and
- (ii) on-going collaborative research projects currently held by him / her in any capacity (e.g. PC, Co-PI, Co-I, Collaborator, etc.).

If the number declared in (i) exceeds **THREE OR** the number declared in (ii) exceeds **TWO**, please provide the following information:

- (i) overall amount of time spent on research in percentage terms; and
- (ii) justifications on how he / she would be able to take up this additional research project if funded while maintaining the research quality.

11. Re-submission of a Proposal Not Supported Previously

- (a) Applicants need to provide details in case the proposal is a re-submission (submitted to the UGC / RGC before) or is largely related to a proposal that has been submitted to the UGC / RGC or other funding bodies. It is the responsibility of the applicants to declare clearly and honestly whether the proposal is a re-submission. Applicants should re-visit the main concerns / suggestions previously expressed by external reviewers if an earlier / related version of the proposal has been assessed before. RGC reserves the right to discount the rating of an application for its failure to acknowledge the fact that it is a re-submission of a previous application. Applicants should provide the number of times of re-submission under RIF since its first

submission, and provide a summary of all previous submission and the revisions made to each of the previous submission.

- (b) & (c) These sections allow the applicant to respond to those comments, and explain whether and what changes have been incorporated in the latest proposal. Some external reviewers' comments may be more agreeable / disagreeable than others. However, if a rebuttal is offered, it should be scholarly and preferably measured. Under the existing policy, re-submitted proposals, will be treated as fresh applications in peer-review and handled in an identical manner to other new applications. Although RIF Committee will take into account the PCs' responses to the reviewers' comments, RIF Committee is not obliged to invite the same group of external reviewers for assessment of the new application.

12. Grant Record of Project Coordinator / Co-Principal Investigators

It is the responsibility of applicants (both PC and Co-PI(s)) to ensure that no duplicate funding from all sources including 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) in this section may result in disqualification of the application and debarring from applying future UGC / RGC grants. PC / Co-PI(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 RGC to make the final decision on whether two proposals / projects are related. The judgement of RGC is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the PC or the Co-PI(s) to declare related proposals / projects when there is uncertainty. The PC and the Co-PI(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. RGC may still fund the proposals concerned if the applicants are able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects for separate funding.

- (a) For the PC, please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals undertaken / submitted by the PC (in capacity of PC / PI / Co-PI / Co-I) including
- (i) completed research projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) in the past five years;

- (ii) on-going research projects funded from all sources (including project(s) funded but yet to commence; irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); and
- (iii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC).

Please also provide the objectives for each of the completed / on-going / pending projects / proposals under (i), (ii) and (iii) as well as the number of hours per week spent on each of the on-going projects (except the involvement as Co-I in General Research Fund / Joint Research Schemes projects funded by RGC) under (ii).

If the PC has any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, including but not limited to data collection, preliminary research, working papers, publications (such as journal papers, conference papers and books, etc.), presentations, media interviews and other submitted proposals, etc., please provide the details (such as the title of the projects and / or papers / publications, or a brief description of the preliminary research work, etc.) whether or not such work was part of a funded project; and provide clarifications that distinguish that related research work from the work requested to be funded through this proposal. Any researcher who fails to disclose any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal will be subject to disciplinary action.

- (b) For each Co-PI, please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals undertaken / submitted by each Co-PI (in capacity of PC / PI / Co-PI / Co-I) including:

- (i) on-going research projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); and
- (ii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC).

Please also provide the number of hours per week spent on each of the on-going projects (except the involvement as Co-I in General Research Fund / Joint Research Schemes projects funded by RGC).

If the Co-PI has any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, including but not limited to data collection, preliminary research, working papers, publications (such as journal papers, conference papers and books, etc.), presentations, media interviews and other submitted proposals, etc., please provide the details (such as the title of the projects and / or papers / publications, or a brief description of the preliminary research work, etc.) whether or not such work was part of a funded project; and provide clarifications that distinguish that related research work from the work requested to be funded through this proposal. Any researcher who

fails to disclose any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal will be subject to disciplinary action.

- (c) Please include a summary of a maximum of 400 words in standard RGC format, one summary per application, on the key results and publications in respect of each previously UGC / RGC and non-UGC / RGC funded project undertaken by the PC and Co-PI(s), in descending chronological order, which are relevant to the application.

ANCILLARY INFORMATION

13. Research Ethics / Safety approval and Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records

(a) Research Ethics / Safety Approval

It is the responsibility of the university and the PC 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 artefacts, living animals and / or human subjects including social sciences research involving human subjects (e.g. potential physical or 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 PC. The PC's university is required to complete and sign Part III of the application form to confirm whether the research proposal involves human subjects / artefacts and certify whether the relevant approval is required and if required, the relevant approval has been given / is being sought. For research involving clinical trials, PCs are allowed to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement. Please also see the respective notes in Part III below.

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

It is the responsibility of the university and the PC 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 PC. The PC's university is required to complete and sign Part III of this application form to confirm the relevant approval, if necessary, has been given / is being sought.

For both Section 13(a) and (b) with the exception of research involving clinical trials, applications should not be submitted unless the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has / have been or is / are being sought. RGC will regard the applications as being withdrawn if no confirmation of approval is provided to RGC by **30 September 2024**.

If the university / PC declared that no approval was required but RGC / RIF Committee eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

14. Release of Completion Report, Data Archive Possibilities, and Public Access of Publications Resulting from Research Funded by RGC

Release of completion report

PCs 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 PC) to the public through RGC website. PCs 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.

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

Public access of publication resulting from research funded by RGC

- (i) Upon acceptance of a paper for publication resulting from the work done on a research project funded in whole or in part by RGC, the PC 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 university's repository for open access;
- (ii) if both (i) (A) and (B) are not allowed, the PC should request the publisher's permission to place either version in his / her university's 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 PC should deposit a copy of the publication in his / her university's repository as early as possible but no later than six months after publication or the embargo period, if any.

15. Education Plan, Knowledge & Technology Transfer Plan, Collaboration Letters and Supporting Documents

Appendix I: Education Plan (Mandatory)

Applicants should describe how they will leverage the research in an educational context with a view to strengthening the teaching-research integration. As there may be different expectation within different disciplines, a wide range of educational activities will be acceptable (with a maximum of 400 words in standard RGC format).

Appendix II: Supporting statements from potential users of the research, who may be prepared to co-invest or engage in some way in collaborative activity with the PC / Co-PI

Applicants may include supporting statements from potential users of the research, who may be prepared to co-invest or engage in some way in collaborative activity with the PC / Co-PI. The potential users may or may not be organisational partners of the research project.

Appendix III: Collaboration letters from Co-PIs and Organisational Partners

Only letter(s) of collaboration from Co-PIs and organisational partners (who are not potential user of research) are allowed in this appendix. Please combine all letters, in the same order in Section 1(a), in a single pdf file for uploading.

Appendix IV: Knowledge & Technology Transfer Plan (Optional)

Applicants who contemplate applying for funding support from the Government's Innovation and Technology Fund or other funding agency at a later stage may provide a technology transfer plan in the full proposal in one separate page. The plan will be passed to the corresponding funding agency for advance information. This plan will not be assessed by RGC for the purpose of making funding decisions. The knowledge & technology transfer plan should include information such as:

- (a) Name of the funding agency for future funding support
- (b) Activities to be undertaken to:
 - disseminate the R&D deliverables;
 - realise the application of the R&D deliverables in the public sector, i.e. the R&D deliverables being used in government departments, public bodies, trade associations, charitable organisations, etc.; and / or
 - market the R&D deliverables in the commercial world, e.g. target markets and customers.
- (c) Potential partners for knowledge & technology transfer / manufacturing, servicing, etc. If possible, please provide

information in relation to the future positioning of the product / technology / service in the market.

- (d) Associated / complementary research and development projects which may synergise with this project for knowledge & technology transfer. In this case, please give some brief information of such project(s).
- (e) Future plans to apply for Innovation and Technology Fund or other funding agency (please indicate) to support the applied research component of the proposed project.

Appendix V: Statement on Public Policy Element (Optional)

One of the initiatives of the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) is to set up a linkage between research projects with a public policy element with the appropriate policy bureaux so that they could be considered for possible implementation. This initiative would help formulate innovative policy response that could effectively address societal challenges and is supported.

Applicants who wish to have their project details released to the PICO if their applications are successful, please provide in one separate page a statement on the public policy element of the project. This statement will not be assessed by RGC for the purpose of shortlisting proposals.

Appendix VI: Proposed changes to information submitted at preliminary proposal stage with detailed justification (Optional)

If applicants wish to make any changes to the information submitted at preliminary proposal stage, they should highlight the change(s) and provide sound justification for the proposed change(s) in this appendix. As no major changes are expected, only one page for this appendix is allowed.

Appendix VII: Other supporting documents

Only supporting documents (e.g. ethics / safety approval letters) are allowed in this appendix. Applicants should not make use of this appendix to supplement the contents of other sections. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have abused the purpose of this section.

**PART III UNIVERSITY'S ENDORSEMENT AND DECLARATION OF
RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY**

[To be completed by the appropriate authority of the PC's university]

1. University's Endorsement

The university should confirm that it has evaluated and given support to the application before submission to RGC. The university is also required to confirm that (i) the PC fully meets the criteria for RIF; and (ii) the applicant will have the number of hours per week as declared in Part I to supervise the proposed project without prejudice to his / her existing commitment in other research work, teaching and administrative duties.

The university is also required to report to RGC immediately if a PC subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant and recommend to RGC for approval a suitable new PC, if any, to take over / conclude the commenced project.

2. University's Commitments

- (a) The university is required to verify and confirm whether adequate supervision, research facilities and training provisions are in place to meet the need of RPg students so employed under the research grant if the application is supported by RGC. Nevertheless, it should be also made clear that the primary duty of the PC of RGC grant is to complete the project according to plan and that the training of students should not be used to justify any delay in project completion nor unsatisfactory project performance.
- (b) to (g) For items (b) to (g), please see the notes for Section 4 in Part II.
- (h) Coordinating university is required to undertake to provide a video clip to publicize the project's research achievements within three months upon satisfactory rating of completion report, if the project is funded.
- (i) To safeguard the interests of the researcher and the university, universities bear primary responsibility for prevention, detection and investigation of research misconduct, including but not limiting to misusing of funds, data falsification, plagiarism and seeking duplicate funding for projects which the applicant has already completed partially or entirely. University is strongly advised to use anti-plagiarism software before submitting the application to RGC and verify if this application has been scanned by anti-plagiarism software in item (i) and provide reason(s) for not doing so.

3. Research Ethics / Safety Approval and Access to Government / Official / Private Data and Records

- (a) The university should confirm that the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has / have been or is / are being obtained in respect of projects involving safety hazards or the use of artefacts, living animal or human subjects, including those in social sciences research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harms, discomfort or stress to human subjects in a research project, subjects' privacy, etc.). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the universities to ascertain if they involve human subjects / artefacts. For applications involving clinical trials, PCs are allowed to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement. For other non-clinical applications involving human subjects, the university must give approval / exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by **30 September 2024** as is the case with other ethics / safety approval. If the university is unable to confirm by 30 September 2024 that the required approval has been obtained, RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.
- (b) The university should confirm that the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has / have been or is / are being obtained in respect of access to data / records critical to the proposed research. If the university is unable to confirm **by 30 September 2024** that the required approval has been obtained, RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.

For (a) and (b) above, if the university / PC declared that no approval was required but RGC / RIF Committee eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

Part III should be completed and signed by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible person(s) in the university.

* * * * *

UGC Secretariat
July 2024

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, 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 RGC committees / subject panels in identifying external reviewers to assess your research proposal;
- (d) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by 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 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 RGC. Staff of the UGC Secretariat, members of 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 RGC. Information so collected by 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 RGC separately when you submit your research proposal. 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 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 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 committees / panels 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 committees / panels, and the availability of funds, in that particular year);
- (c) 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 universities.

Physical retention of applications

5. Applications that are funded by 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 RGC about you or your research proposal and to update or correct such data. Nevertheless, 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 RGC should be made in writing, by post or by fax, addressed as follows:

Assistant Secretary General (Research)⁴
Research Grants Council
7/F Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong

Fax: 2845 1183

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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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