

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

European Union (EU) – Hong Kong (HK) Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the Research Grants Council (RGC) 2025/26 Exercise – First Round

Guidance Notes for Completing the Application Form (for Hong Kong Applicants)

All applicants should read the Guidance Notes carefully before completing and submitting your research proposal. The RGC may stop processing your application if your application does not comply with any of the requirements as set out in the Guidance Notes.

GENERAL

- (a) These notes are intended to be read by applicant(s) / related staff of university(ies) before completion and submission of an application for the EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the RGC. Applicants should also refer to the Call Circular issued for this exercise for application procedures and other requirement details.
- (b) The Application Form (EU/RGC 1) comprises three parts: Part I Summary of the Research Proposal; Part II Details of the Research Proposal; and Part III University's Statement on Submission. In addition, the Hong Kong applicants should provide a Summary of the Proposal Approved by the EU (EU/RGC 1b) with research work undertaken by the Hong Kong team (to be signed by the European Coordinator of the Horizon Europe project) and the EU's official notification of the proposal being funded to the RGC.
- (c) The Application Form should be completed in English.
- (d) In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, applicants must complete the applications, **including attached pdf documents**, in the following standard RGC format. **Failure to comply with the application format and / or the allowable page will lead to disqualification of the application.**

Font:	Times New Roman
Font size:	12 point
Margin:	2.5 cm all round
Spacing:	Single-line spacing
PDF version:	Compatible with Adobe Acrobat Reader 5

- (e) All sections of the relevant parts should be completed. Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert “NA” or “Nil”.
- (f) Hong Kong applicants should submit their proposals in a hard copy and a soft copy (with size up to 5Mb per proposal) together with a Summary of Proposal Approved by the EU and the EU’s official notification as stated in item (b) above to the RGC through the Research Offices (ROs) of their respective universities by **1700 hours on 7 July 2025**.
- (g) 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 use double-sided printing / photocopying when making copies. It is important that applicants should comply with the page / word limits specified in various sections of the Application Form. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals exceed the allowable page / word limits in various sections. Attachments are allowed only to cater for the needs of essential documents such as letters of collaboration or price quotations. Supplementary materials such as papers, manuscripts, publications or detailed research work are not acceptable.
- (h) Information on the Application Form should be consistent with that given in the application of the funded Horizon Europe project submitted by the Coordinator to the EU. If not, the application would not be processed further. It is the obligation of the Hong Kong Principal Investigators (PIs) to ensure that their respective applications contain sufficient and consistent information for evaluation. Incomplete submission (such as those lacking substantial data / information for evaluation) or inconsistent / inaccurate information would lead to disqualification of an application.
- (i) 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.
- (j) Applicants are prohibited to communicate with RGC Council and 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.
- (k) Applicants shall not include links to external websites in their applications which contain extra information about the proposed project in the research proposal.
- (l) The on-costs related to research projects funded by the RGC will be disbursed to the universities for their disposal. The UGC Secretariat will liaise with the ROs of the universities on the calculation and disbursement details separately. Hong

Kong PIs are not required to include the calculation of on-costs in the Application Form. They have to include the project costs only.

- (m) To safeguard the interests of the researcher and the university, the awardee university bears the primary responsibility for prevention, detection and investigation of research misconduct, including but not limited to misuse of funds, data falsification, plagiarism, self-plagiarism and double dipping. The university is strongly encouraged to vet the grant applications using anti-plagiarism software before submitting them to the RGC.
- (n) Unless otherwise stated, all funding levels stated in this Application Form are in Hong Kong Dollars.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- (o) Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the Hong Kong PI and no applicant should submit more than one application in this capacity. A Hong Kong PI of an on-going EU-HK project is not allowed to submit a new application unless both collaborative partners have completed the last approved project and the Hong Kong PI has submitted his / her completion report to the RGC before the application deadline. Nevertheless, a Hong Kong PI will not be subject to the above restrictions if he / she only participates as a team member of the new application. Other joint applicants, if any, will be regarded as Co-Investigators (Co-Is). Each Co-I should have a clear, distinct and material role. Excessive number of Co-Is should be avoided. Save in very exceptional circumstances, the RGC will not entertain requests for the addition of Co-Is to a project after the funding award. Once the application is submitted, **a change of Hong Kong PI during the period of processing the application will not be approved.**
- (p) The Hong Kong PI of an RGC project grant must be an academic staff member of an UGC-funded university with conditions of employment meeting **ALL** the following requirements:
 - (i) having a full-time¹ appointment in the university proper²;
 - (ii) being in Staff Grades from ‘A’ to ‘I’³ as defined in the Common Data Collection Format (i.e. from “Professor” to “Assistant Lecturer”, see Annex B of General Research Fund (GRF) 2025/26 “Scheme Overview and

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.

Guidance Notes (GRF2)", which is available on the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/form/GRF2.pdf>;

- (iii) being primarily engaged in and spending at least 80% of time in degree or higher degree work⁴ at the university proper; and
 - (iv) salary being wholly funded⁵ by the university proper.
- (q) Hong Kong PIs falling in the following categories are subject to the additional requirements besides meeting criteria (p)(i) to (iv) above:
- (v) A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the university on or before the RGC's submission deadline and that his / her appointment would take effect on or before 7 July 2025;
 - (vi) A staff member employed on a fixed term contract should be eligible at the time of funding award being made in October 2025 and for at least the first year of the project's planned duration; and
 - (vii) A visiting scholar should have a full-time employment at the university proper covering at least one year or the expected duration of the project whichever is the longer.
- (r) An academic staff member who is engaged in non-degree programmes which are still funded by the UGC may also apply and serve as Hong Kong PI. Eligible staff in this category must be wholly funded from the General Funds of the university concerned.
- (s) Notwithstanding these, cases of exceptional circumstances may be considered by the RGC on a case-by-case basis. The university should seek the RGC's special approval for such cases before submitting the application.

INFORMATION UPDATE

- (t) A brief update of the information contained in the Application Form, if any, should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat on or before **4 August 2025**, indicating any significant changes, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the Hong Kong PIs,

⁴ A PI who is / will be seconded to work full-time or part-time at the two Innovation and Technology (I&T) clusters (Health@InnoHK and AIR@InnoHK) at the Hong Kong Science Park; or to conduct research in a university or a research institute / body / agency in the Mainland / overseas jurisdiction, is still considered eligible to apply for the EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the RGC.

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

alternative funding obtained, declarations of similar / related projects / proposals / research work, investigators' Curriculum Vitae (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 research proposals substantially. Two hardcopies and one softcopy of the information update should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat on or before **4 August 2025**.

- (u) If an update is provided for ethics / safety approval for an application, the respective ROs should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before **4 August 2025**. 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.
- (v) If an update is provided for approval for access to Government / official / private data and records for an application, the respective ROs should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before **4 August 2025**. Evidence of approval should also be submitted at this stage.
- (w) If an update is provided on any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, the Hong Kong PI / Co-I(s) should submit the relevant update to the RGC on or before **4 August 2025**.

ENQUIRIES

- (x) Enquiries about the contents of these Guidance Notes and other related matters about the EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the RGC should be directed to the ROs of the universities which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the RGC matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the ROs of the universities. Their contact details are as follows:

Ms Cecilia Sun
City University of Hong Kong
83 Tat Chee Avenue
Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

Tel.: 3442 6832
Fax: 3442 0136

Mr Ivan Lau
Hong Kong Baptist University
Kowloon Tong
Kowloon

Tel.: 3411 7941
Fax: 3411 5525

Ms Connie Lam	Tel.: 2616 7683
Lingnan University	Fax: 2591 9618
8 Castle Peak Road	
Tuen Mun, New Territories	

Ms Harry Yau	Tel.: 3943 6545
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	Fax: 3942 0993
Shatin	
New Territories	

Ms Sharon Cheung	Tel.: 2948 6318
The Education University of Hong Kong	Fax: 2948 7697
10 Lo Ping Road	
Tai Po, New Territories	

Miss Ivy Chau	Tel.: 3400 3630
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Fax: 2355 7651
Hung Hom	
Kowloon	

Ms Maggie Hui	Tel.: 2358 6923
The Hong Kong University of Science	Fax: 2358 1541
and Technology	
Clear Water Bay	
Kowloon	

Miss Kay Ling	Tel.: 3917 7080
The University of Hong Kong	Fax: 2803 0558
Pokfulam Road	
Hong Kong	

- (y) 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 the “Guidelines on Handling of Research Misconduct Cases” available on the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/guidelines/index.html>.
- (z) Applicants are also requested to read carefully the guidelines on “Handling of Information and Personal Data Contained in RGC Research Funding Application” (see Annex A of GRF 2025/26 “Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (GRF2)” on the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/form/GRF2.pdf>). Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the Application Form may contact the ROs of their own universities.

PART I SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

1. Names and Academic Affiliations of PIs

To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of PIs, PIs should enter the name as shown on his / her Hong Kong Identity Card / passport (where applicable) and use the standardized format of names as agreed with respective universities when submitting all RGC grant applications:

	PI Surname	PI 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.

2. Particulars of the Research Project

- (a) Please provide the project title in both English and Chinese. The project title should be informative, but short and concise. The project title should be the same as that used in the Summary of the Proposal Approved by the EU.
- (b) All applicants must indicate with caution the nature of the application being submitted:
 - “New” refers to an application on research topic which the Hong Kong PI and / or Co-I(s) applies / apply for RGC funds for the first time.
 - “Re-submission” refers to an application on research topic which the Hong Kong PI and / or Co-I(s) has / have previously submitted or is largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to but not supported by the UGC / RGC or other funding agencies.
 - “Continuation” refers to an application continuing the work previously funded by the UGC / RGC.
- (c) For “research project proposals”, only proposals under the **food, agriculture, biosolutions (linked to the agri-food sector), climate change, and biodiversity disciplines** are applicable. “Exchange (mobility) proposals” are open to all disciplines.

- (d) The project fields should be the consistent with the proposal submitted to the EU. Please refer to the list of subject areas in Annex C of GRF 2025/26 “Scheme Overview and Guidance Notes (GRF2)”, which is available on the RGC website: <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/form/GRF2.pdf>.
- (e) Please give a maximum of five keywords to characterise the work of the proposal.
- (f) The project duration should normally be not more than five years or the duration of the concerned Horizon Europe project, whichever is shorter. The Hong Kong PI should not propose a project end date which is beyond the project duration of the concerned Horizon Europe project.
- (g) The grants sought for “research project proposals” and “exchange (mobility) proposals” should not exceed HK\$3 million and HK\$0.5 million (both exclusive of on-costs) respectively.

3. Abstract of Research Comprehensible to a non-Specialist

A short abstract of a maximum of 400 words comprehensible to a non-specialist should be given. This should be informative and indicative of the nature of research to be conducted. If a proposal is funded, the abstract will be uploaded on the 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.

4. Re-submission of a Proposal not Supported Previously

- (a) Hong Kong PI should provide details in case the proposal is a re-submission (submitted to the UGC / RGC before) or is largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to the UGC / RGC or other funding bodies. It is the responsibility of the Hong Kong PI to declare clearly and honestly whether the proposal is a re-submission. Hong Kong PI should re-visit the main concerns / suggestions previously expressed by external 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 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 since its first submission and proposal reference number(s) (if applicable), and provide a summary of all the previous submissions and the revisions made to each of the previous submissions.
- (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 the JRS Subject Panels will take into account the Hong Kong PIs' responses to the reviewers' comments, the Panels are not obliged to invite the same group of external reviewers for assessment of the new application.

PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

RESEARCH DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED WORK TO BE DONE BY HONG KONG TEAM

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. The RGC will not further process the application if insufficient / incomplete information is provided on the Application Form.

1. Objectives and Impact

(a maximum of 800 words in total for the objectives and impact)

- (a) The objectives of the project must be presented in point form and reasons for undertaking the project shall be provided. Applicants are required to identify the key issues and problems being addressed. The key issues and the elements of the problem should be described and those elements which are critical to the solution of the problem should be clearly identified.
- (b) Applicants are required to state the possible outcome of the research project, its relevance, significance and value, such as contribution to academic, educational, scientific or professional development or potential for practical application.

2. Background of Research, Research Plan and Methodology

(a maximum of eight A4 pages in total for Sections 2(a) and (b))

- (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 continuation of previous 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 one-page Gantt chart showing the research activities should be given.
- (d) A maximum of two additional A4 pages for diagrams, photos, charts and tables, etc., if any.
- (e) The Hong Kong PI should justify why the proposed research works should be done by the Hong Kong team and explain its impact to Hong Kong.
- (f) The page limit of Sections 1 and 2 does not include references. A maximum of three A4 pages for references is allowed for listing the publications cited in Sections 1 and 2. All references should be provided in full and include all authors. Generally accepted citation format (e.g. American Psychological Association (APA) format) should be used.

Applicants are required to list the name of journal, conference or other dissemination means, e.g. book chapter, for dissemination of research output and the target timing of dissemination, e.g. 2025 3Q.

PROJECT FUNDING

The RGC may not process your 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 university which fails 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 and overseas telephone charges to funded projects.

Permissible Items

- A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. Hong Kong PIs and Co-Is are not regarded as project staff and their salaries must not be paid from RGC's project fund. Academic staff remunerated by any UGC-funded universities in Hong Kong must not be paid with honorarium or other forms of payment.
- The estimated costs should not include any "hidden" costs covered by recurrent block grant expenditure, such as the normal salaries of teaching staff who spend a portion of their time on research, cost of utilities, stationery, etc. They should include only expenditure which would not otherwise be separately incurred. Examples of these are salaries of Research Assistants (RA) specifically employed

for this project; and purchase of equipment necessary for the investigation but not available in the universities.

- In cases where a particular RA is employed for several projects, his / her 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 justifications should be provided. Otherwise, the RGC will not consider the request.

3. Cost and Justification

The following items, except (a)(iv) and (v), are for “research project proposals” only. For applicants of “exchange (mobility) proposals”, please itemize the budget such as the passage and subsistence costs for Hong Kong applicants and research postgraduate students to visit collaborators in Europe, and supplementary funding for justified research expenditure under (iv).

(a) Estimated cost and resource implications

One-line vote items

(a)(i) Supporting staff costs

Please state the number, rank, duties, duration and cost of staff involved, with justifications for the proposed rank and duration. The RGC normally supports research support staff at the level of RA, post-doctoral fellows or research postgraduate students. If supporting staff of a higher grade and / or other personnel are requested, detailed justifications should be provided. The rates for RA and Senior RA (SRA) in the academic year 2024/25 are HK\$361,000 per annum and HK\$579,000 per annum respectively. These indicative rates are for reference and will be reviewed regularly by the RGC. The total staff costs supported will then depend on the indicative rates or the rates proposed by the applicants concerned, whichever is lower. In the case of applications for funding for post-doctoral fellows, their CVs in one A4 page should also be attached if available.

(a)(ii) Equipment expenses

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 the RGC. In addition, the RGC will not provide funding for the purchase or use of standard

equipment such as desktop computers, servers, laptop computers, printers and scanners known to be available, or reasonably expected to be provided in the universities concerned. Universities may be required by the RGC to confirm the availability of universities' resources prior to their acceptance of an award. This is what the RGC means by "university's commitment".

For equipment, the following points should be addressed:

- (1) Why is the equipment essential to the project?
- (2) Has the department / university already provided such equipment?
- (3) Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities and what is the possibility of sharing?
- (4) Provide information supporting the estimated cost of equipment, e.g. quotes from suppliers. Items costing over HK\$200,000 and 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 application deadline. No late submission will be accepted.

For purchase of equipment at or over HK\$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)(iii) Outsourcing expenses of research work outside Hong Kong

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

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

For subcontracting services or research work to be conducted outside Hong Kong, the Hong Kong PIs have to justify in their proposals to the RGC / JRS Subject Panels for approval. The RGC / JRS Subject Panels will evaluate the merits and justifications of the case according to the conditions specified above. For services / work over HK\$200,000, price quotations must be provided.

Applicants should also provide detailed justifications of sample sizes and costs for surveys conducted outside Hong Kong.

(a)(iv) General expenses

Outsourcing services other than those specified in (a)(iii) above should be included under general expenses. Please itemize all general expenses. For services / purchase over HK\$200,000, price quotations must be provided. 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.

Applicants should also provide detailed justifications of sample sizes and costs for surveys conducted in Hong Kong.

The RGC funding will also provide support for reasonable passage and subsistence costs for Hong Kong researchers and research postgraduate students to visit their collaborators. For visits made by the Hong Kong project team, the destination and period of visits, and the number of travellers for each trip should be stated and justified. The objectives which the visit(s) aim(s) for should also be stated. Travel of research postgraduate students must be accompanied by the Hong Kong PI and with justifications provided. The prevailing reference rates for air passage and subsistence are HK\$9,800 and HK\$900 per day respectively and they will be funded at the reference rate or the rate proposed by the PIs concerned, whichever is lower.

For “exchange (mobility) proposals”, in addition to the passage and subsistence costs, the PIs may request supplementary funding for other necessary expenditure relevant to the research work to be done by the Hong Kong team when visiting their collaborators. Items under such request should be itemized and specified clearly. Strong justification must be given to support such request.

(a)(v) Conference expenses

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

Earmarked items

(a)(vi) Costs for employment of relief teacher

Applicants of “research project proposals” may apply for funding support for the employment of relief teachers. Please state the rank of the relief teacher, the months and costs involved. The RGC agrees in principle to provide, in cases where there is genuine need, funding for relief teachers so as to enable the Hong Kong PI to allocate sufficient time for research. The duration of employment of

relief teachers should normally range from six to a maximum of twelve months for a 36-month project. Relief teachers engaged for this purpose are meant to relieve the Hong Kong PIs of their day-to-day teaching loads and administrative burden related to teaching work. Nevertheless, the RGC is of the view that it is the primary responsibility of the universities to put their resources in areas where they would be best used. Hence, such funding will be provided only exceptionally and upon detailed and sound justifications. It is not necessary to find a relief teacher with equivalent salary, status and experience as the Hong Kong PI concerned. The relief teacher is also not supposed to take up non-teaching related duties, such as purely administrative work, of the Hong Kong PI. In this connection, the universities are requested to confirm that the salaries for the relief teachers proposed by the Hong Kong PIs do not exceed the salary of Staff Grade 'G' (i.e. Lecturer (U)) of the universities concerned. If the applicant or the university intends to employ a relief teacher with salary higher than that for 'Lecturer (U)', strong and detailed justifications must be provided for consideration by the RGC. If a relief teacher is required, the CV of the teacher in one A4 page should be attached, if available, for consideration by the RGC.

Please also state the current average teaching load (total number of classroom hours per academic year). Universities are requested to confirm that the Hong Kong PI's declared teaching load has been verified.

Under the existing policy, each applicant can hold at most one UGC / RGC grant with an element of relief teacher (save for Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme (HSSPFS)). To this end, holders of grant for employment of relief teacher under UGC / RGC funding schemes are considered eligible to apply for grant for relief teachers under this scheme by the RGC's submission deadline if and only if he / she will submit the completion report of his / her existing project (except HSSPFS) on or before the application deadline. The concerned university is requested to confirm the applicant's declaration and where appropriate, undertake to follow up with the applicant on the withdrawal of such budget item in the application in writing to the Secretariat by the same deadline.

(a)(vii) High-performance computing services expenses

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

(a)(viii) Research-related software licence / database / dataset expenses

For requests for purchase / subscription of research-related software licence(s) / database(s) / dataset(s), price quotations should be provided. Requests without

quotation may not be considered. The university should not use the RGC funds to purchase standard software licences / databases / datasets.

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

4. Existing Facilities and Major Equipment Available in Hong Kong University for this Research Project

Please elaborate the existing facilities and equipment available in the Hong Kong university for this research project.

5. Funds Secured or to be Secured

Other sources of funds can include private donations, awards or grants from other organizations, 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 will be deducted from the total cost of the project in Section 3(a) of Part II.

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

COLLABORATION DETAILS

6. Particulars of PI and Co-Is

- (a) Please provide information about the PI and project team members. The PI should indicate whether he / she or any of the team member(s) is / are UGC / RGC / RGC Panel / Committee Member(s) as at the deadline of the application. The Hong Kong PI should provide the number of hours per week to be spent on the proposed project.

Local applicants in all capacities are required to provide an ORCID iD to facilitate identification of researchers. Non-local applicants in the capacity of PIs / Co-I(s) are encouraged to provide their ORCID iDs. ORCID iD can be registered for free at <http://orcid.org>.

- (b) This section should summarize the qualifications of both teams' PIs and each of the Co-I(s) who will be involved in the project. The CV(s) to be attached should include the following information, as appropriate:

Name, academic qualifications, previous academic position(s) held (with date(s)) and present position (state if applicant is a visiting academic from overseas), previous relevant research work, publication records including the five most representative publications in the recent five years and five representative publications beyond the recent five years (within ten years at maximum) and others including research-related prizes and awards, brief descriptions of experience in consultancies, service as a referee in evaluating other grant applications, patents, PhD theses supervised, etc.

The author list of the publications in the CV(s) 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 JRS Subject Panels' consideration. Failure to comply with the above requirements may lead to disqualification of the concerned application.

Each CV should be limited to two A4 pages in the standard RGC format stated in item (d) of "GENERAL" of the Guidance Notes above.

- (c) Please give details of the plan(s) of collaboration. The role and specific task(s) of each individual (including the PI and Co-Is) in the proposed research should be described clearly. This section should be limited to two A4 pages in standard RGC format. The Hong Kong PI should confirm that each of the Hong Kong Co-I(s) listed in the proposal has explicitly agreed to serve in the project team and a copy of the proposal has been provided to each of them. Letter(s) of collaboration from the Co-I(s) should be attached. Further documentary proof on the collaboration should be provided upon request of the RGC / Secretariat.

DECLARATION OF RELATED PROPOSALS / RESEARCH WORK & GRANT RECORD

7. Grant Record and Related Proposals / Research work of Hong Kong PI and Co-I(s)

It is the responsibility of applicants (both Hong Kong PI and Co-I(s)) to ensure that no duplicate funding from all sources including the RGC will be sought / has been sought for the same / substantially similar research project. Failure to declare similar / related projects / proposals / research work (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 for future UGC / RGC grants. Hong Kong PI / Co-I(s)

are required to declare any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, and provide clarifications which distinguish that related research work from the work requested to be funded through this proposal.

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

- (a) For the Hong Kong PI, please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals / work undertaken / submitted by the PI (in the capacity of Project Coordinator (PC) / PI / Co-PI / Co-I) including:
 - (i) research projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) which were completed in the past five years;
 - (ii) on-going research projects funded from all sources (including those funded but yet to commence; irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); and
 - (iii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC).
- (b) Please also provide the objectives for each of the completed / on-going / pending projects / proposals / research work 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 GRF / JRS projects funded by RGC) under (ii).

The PI should also declare

- (iv) any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC and not limited to the past five years), 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. The PI is also required to 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 which 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) For each Co-I, please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals / work undertaken / submitted by each Co-I (in the capacity of PC / PI) including:
- (i) on-going research projects funded from all sources (including those funded but yet to commence; irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); and
 - (ii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC).

Each Co-I should also declare

- (iii) any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC and not limited to the past five years), 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. The Co-I is also required to 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 which 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.

8. Major Research Output of Previously Funded Projects
(a maximum of 400 words in standard RGC format for each project)

Please include the key results and publications in respect of each previously UGC / RGC and non-UGC / RGC funded project undertaken by the Hong Kong PI and each Co-I, in descending chronological order, which are relevant to the application.

ANCILLARY INFORMATION

9. 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 Hong Kong PI to ensure that the research proposal is carefully reviewed for its compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Approval from appropriate authority(ies) should be sought for research involving safety hazards, the study of artefacts or the use of living animals and / or human subjects including those in 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 Hong Kong PI. The PI's university is required to complete and sign Part III of the Application Supplement Form to confirm the details on ethics and safety, in particular whether the research proposal involves human subjects and certify whether the relevant approval is required and if so, the relevant approval has been given / is being sought. For research involving clinical trials, PIs 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 Hong Kong PI 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 Hong Kong PI. The PI's university is required to complete and sign Part III of the Application Supplement Form to confirm the relevant approval, if necessary, has been given / is being sought.

For both Sections 9(a) and (b), applications should not be submitted unless the approval of the appropriate authority(ies) has / have been or is / are being sought. The RGC will regard the applications as being withdrawn if no confirmation of approval is provided to the RGC by **4 August 2025**.

If the university / Hong Kong PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / JRS Subject Panels considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

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

(a) Release of completion report

Hong Kong PIs are required to release the completion reports of Hong Kong teams (containing abstract in non-technical terms, objectives, research output including the list of conference papers / publications / journals and research findings and contact information of PI) to the public through the RGC website. PIs 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.

Hong Kong PIs 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. PIs 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.

With a view to further promoting open access and obtaining a more in-depth understanding of the local open access landscape, the RGC will collect open-access-related information of peer-reviewed journal publications arising directly from the project.

(b) Public access of publication resulting from research funded by the 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 the RGC, the Hong Kong PI 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 Hong Kong PI 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 12 months if required by the publisher; and
- (iii) subject to the publisher's agreement on (i) or (ii) above, the Hong Kong PI 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.

11. Exclusion of Reviewers

If, for any reason of possible conflicts of interest, the Hong Kong PI wants to exclude a person from reviewing his / her application, he / she should submit the request in writing separately through the respective RO setting out the full circumstances and justifications. Such request should not be made under any section of the Application Form which in its entirety will be sent to reviewers for assessment. In all cases, the RGC reserves the right of final decision on the selection and invitation of reviewers having regard to the merits involved.

PART III UNIVERSITY'S STATEMENT ON SUBMISSION

[To be completed by the appropriate authority of the Hong Kong PI's university]

1. University's Endorsement on Eligibility and Accuracy on Submission

The university should confirm that it has evaluated and given support to the application before submission to the RGC.

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 limited to misuse of funds, data falsification, plagiarism, self-plagiarism and double-dipping. The university is strongly advised to use anti-plagiarism software before submitting the application to the RGC and verify if this application has been scanned by anti-plagiarism software and provide reason(s) for not doing so.

The university is also required to confirm that (i) the Hong Kong PI fully meets the criteria for the RGC grant under EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the RGC; (ii) the salary of the relief teacher proposed by the Hong Kong PI not exceeding the salary of Staff Grade "G" of the university concerned; (iii) the existing teaching load is verified; and (iv) the applicant will have the number of hours per week as declared in Section 6(a) of Part II of the Application Form 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 the RGC immediately if a Hong Kong PI subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant and recommend to the RGC for approval a suitable new Hong Kong PI, if any, to take over / conclude the commenced project.

2. University's Commitments on Support for Staff and other Personnel

(a) & (b) The university is required to verify and confirm whether the EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism by the RGC application is in line with its role, and that adequate supervision, research facilities and training provisions are in place to meet the needs of research postgraduate students so employed under the research grant if the application is supported by the RGC. Nevertheless, it should be also made clear that the primary duty of the Hong Kong PI of the RGC grant is to complete the project according to the plan and that the training of students should not be used to justify any delay in project completion nor unsatisfactory project performance.

(d) to (f) For items (d) to (f), please see the notes in Section 3(b), (d) and (e) of Part II.

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, the study of artefacts or the use of living animals and / or human subjects, including those in social sciences research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harms, discomfort or stress to human subjects that a research project might generate, subjects' privacy, etc.). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the universities to ascertain if they involve human subjects. If they do, the university must give approval / exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by **4 August 2025** as is the case with other ethics / safety approval. If the university is unable to confirm by **4 August 2025** that the required approval has been obtained, the RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn. For applications involving clinical trials, PIs are allowed to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement.
- (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 **4 August 2025** that the required approval has been obtained, the RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.

For (a) and (b) above, if the university / Hong Kong PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / JRS Subject Panels eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

Part III should be completed and signed by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible staff in the university.

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UGC Secretariat
April 2025