RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme 2027/28
Guidance Note for Applicants

The Guidance Note should be read by applicants for submission to the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS). Please ensure that you read this Guidance Note carefully before completing and submitting your initial application. The Research Grants Council (RGC) may stop processing your application if your application does not meet the requirements set out in this Guidance Note.

SCHEME PROCESS

(a) The deadline for the submission of initial application for the HKPFS is **1 December 2026 at 12:00 noon Hong Kong time**. Late submissions will not be considered.

(b) Applicants should note that the online application system, Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme Electronic System (HKPFSES), will **time out automatically after idling for 30 minutes**. All unsubmitted entries will be lost upon system time-out.

(c) Initial application, excluding this Guidance Note, is composed of the following sections:

A. Personal Particulars
B. Choice of University(ies) and Programme(s) for PhD Study
C. Authorization and Declaration
D. Source of Information

(d) In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all applicants, **each applicant should only submit one initial application** through the HKPFSES at *https://cerg1.ugc.edu.hk/hkpfs/InitApplication.jsp*. In the event that an applicant is found to have submitted more than one initial application, all applications submitted by the same applicant for the HKPFS will be **disqualified** even if the applicant is nominated by an university to compete for the HKPFS award. In case multiple initial applications have been made by mistake, applicant is advised to contact *HKPF@ugc.edu.hk* immediately for assistance **before the initial application deadline**.

(e) The initial application form, except for the field requiring the input of applicant's Name in Chinese (if applicable), must be completed **in English**.

(f) Upon submission of the initial application, an HKPFS Reference Number will be automatically generated and assigned for each applicant. An email confirmation stating the **HKPFS Reference Number** and details of the **log-in password** will be sent to the email address specified by the applicant. Applicants are strongly advised to **save and / or print out the email confirmation** for future reference. The **HKPFS Reference Number [PF26-xxxxx]** must be quoted by the applicant in all correspondence with the RGC and in all applications to the chosen University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities as indicated in this initial application. An applicant will need to log-in using the HKPFS Reference Number and log-in password if he/she wishes to change the choice of universities/department/programmes at a later stage.

(g) Applicants **may make changes** to choice(s) of university / department / programme **until** the closing of initial application deadline. However, only two choices saved in the HKPFSES as at the deadline will be processed. **The RGC will not accept any subsequent changes / requests of change of application from applicants after the initial application deadline**.

(h) After completing an initial application, applicants should submit a **full application to the chosen university(ies)** quoting the HKPFS Reference Number **before the university's deadline. Different universities may have their own submission deadlines, and applicants are reminded to take note of them carefully**. Information on the submission deadlines of the eight participating universities is available at *https://cerg1.ugc.edu.hk/hkpfs/apply.html*. **An initial application that is not followed up with a full application to university will be considered void and it will not be processed further by the RGC**.

(i) Applicants should ensure completeness, accuracy and consistency in the data submitted to the RGC through the HKPFSES and information submitted to individual university. Any incompleteness, inaccuracy or inconsistency may lead to an application not being considered under the HKPFS.

(j) Information provided through the HKPFSES will be cross-checked with the information contained in applications submitted to universities for verification purposes. The cross-checking will be done in such a way where an applicant chooses to submit full application to more than one university, each university is privy to the submission it receives and not being aware of other submission(s).

(k) Applicants must comply with the admission and application requirements of individual university concerned. Individual university will usually conduct interviews with applicants as part of the assessment for selection. For programme information, requirements for PhD admission, application methods and deadlines, regulations and policy of individual university, please check with individual university concerned.

(l) Universities will nominate selected candidates to the RGC to compete for the HKPFS award. **In the event that an applicant is nominated by two universities, the RGC will only process the nomination tendered by the university for which the applicant has indicated priority and subsequent award of fellowship by the RGC will also be according to the indicated priority of the applicant**. If an applicant selects two different programmes within the same university and is nominated, the university shall have the discretion to decide on which programme it supports the nomination.

(m) Applicants who are not selected for the award of HKPFS may be accepted by a university for regular PhD admission and may be offered a postgraduate studentship or other funding support by the university.

(n) The email account provided by the applicants in the initial application will be used by the RGC in future correspondence, including award of fellowship, with the applicants.

(o) Enquiries concerning the HKPFS should be made using the applicants' e-mail account specified in the initial application to *HKPF@ugc.edu.hk* quoting the HKPFS Reference Number. Questions regarding admission requirements as well as other university's information should be directed to the relevant universities. Information of the eight participating universities is available at *https://cerg1.ugc.edu.hk/hkpfs/institutions.html*.

(p) **The RGC does not charge any application fee for HKPFS.** However, universities may charge application or other processing fees. Please check with the universities of your choice for details.

(q) The RGC will **only** notify successful applicants the offer of fellowship awards by email and letter. The results will be announced in May 2027 at *https://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/hkpfs/funded_research.html*. The decision of the RGC is final and the RGC will not provide feedback to individual applicant.

(r) The RGC reserves the right to amend the information contained in the Guidance Note and the related application form at any time at its discretion without prior notice. The RGC has the sole right and discretion on the interpretation of the Guidance Note and other arrangements relating to the application, implementation and operation of the HKPFS.

(s) It is the responsibility of the applicant to disclose, where applicable, the use of AI models / systems / tools in preparing the application submitted to the relevant institution, and to ensure that the submitted application complies with the relevant institutional policies of his / her university. This compliance must be maintained during the application preparation stage, and at all times throughout the study period if funded. All applicants are required to disclose details of AI usage, including but not limited to the models / systems / tools being / to be used, purpose of usage, how and the extent of such AI usage, to the relevant institution. For the avoidance of doubt, use of AI for all purposes should be disclosed, including but not limited to generating research ideas and refining research questions; literature review and information retrieval; language editing assistance; citation management; and data analysis. Applicants are reminded to review, verify and validate AI generated content. Applicants assume full responsibility for the scholarly and scientific integrity, accuracy, originality and intellectual content of all AI-generated content in the proposal and research work if funded. In the event of a non-disclosure, or when an applicant makes an incomplete / inaccurate disclosure about the use of AI models / systems / tools with regard to an application, the RGC reserves the right to take appropriate actions.

(t) Data Collection and Management

(i) Data Collection and Consent: Please explain what data will be collected, from whom or what sources, and for what purposes. Research involving collection and use of personal or medical data must comply with relevant ethical standards, applicable laws and regulations[1]. Data collection should be fair and lawful and, where appropriate, with the consent of the data subject. Nominees may be required to provide evidence of consent from the data subject/owner (respective collaborator(s), authorities and/or participants) when necessary, e.g. a letter of support or written agreement.

(ii) Data Management and Security: Please take all practical steps to secure and protect the collected data and research data in both physical and digital forms, i.e. limit disclosure of identifiable

[1] Particularly if the proposed research includes data relating to human participants, or involves international collaborations, or related to data of sensitive areas to be shared with or access by individuals or organisations outside Hong Kong.

information, implement encryption, access control (including clearly setting out policy on remote access and portable storage devices), backup, database and network protection, etc. for the data concerned, and provide regular data security training for the research team. Nominees should describe how data will be organised, documented, maintained, shared and preserved both throughout the project lifecycle and beyond. Nominees should also outline measures to protect data from unauthorised access, loss, misuse or disclosure.

(iii) Data Sharing and Access: Please provide assurance that adequate precautions/controls are put in place to enable responsible sharing of the data concerned and comply with legal and fair contractual agreements between collaborator(s)/authorities and within nominee's own research team. Sharing of and access to the data concerned should be limited to necessary personnel/organisations related to the research. If the research will be published publicly, the datasets should be anonymised to avoid risk of (re)identification.

(iv) Legal and Regulatory Compliance: Please provide assurance on meeting relevant legal and regulatory requirements governing the data, including privacy, confidentiality, intellectual property, export control, cybersecurity and research security obligations. If the data will be transferred across jurisdictions, nominees should explain how to comply with applicable frameworks and requirements in relevant locations, including Hong Kong (with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance), Chinese Mainland and other partner jurisdictions. This includes any cross-jurisdiction transfer, storage, access, sharing, processing, or linkage of research data between jurisdictions. Description should include measures to ensure compliance with applicable privacy and data-protection requirements.

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Research Grants Council
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