

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Task Force on the Review of the Research Grants Council (RGC) (Phase I) was set up in July 2016 under the Research Group (RG), one of the standing committees of the University Grants Committee (UGC). It was entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the Phase I Review of the RGC and submitting recommendations to the RG and UGC. The Phase I Review aims to examine macro issues such as the portfolio balance of the research funding schemes administered by the RGC, the RGC's structure and comparable good practice in overseas funding agencies. The findings of the RGC Review will be considered by the UGC and the RGC.

2. The Task Force, led by Professor Rick Rylance, comprises both local and non-local experts from different disciplines and jurisdictions. Its terms of reference and membership are at **Appendix**.

3. An external consultant namely RAND Europe (the Consultant) was engaged in August 2016 to establish the evidence base for the review. The Task Force had held three formal meetings and one tele-conference with the Consultant to steer the review, monitor progress and ensure timely delivery of the final report. The Task Force Convenor met RAND representatives in person and by teleconference on a regular basis between Task Force meetings.

4. From October to December 2016, the Consultant worked on data collection through extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders -

- (a) questionnaire surveys – to collect views of researchers and RGC Council/Committee/Panel Members;
- (b) online consultation – to collect views from “Other Stakeholder Groups” including the Legislative Council Members, related government bodies, other research funders in Hong Kong, private research users such as trade associations, think tanks and non-governmental

organisations; and

- (c) 18 face-to-face focus group meetings when the Consultant met with various stakeholder groups to explore in depth the questions identified in the surveys and online consultation. These included nine focus group meetings for researchers from different disciplines, career stages and institutions.

5. In April 2017, the Consultant submitted the final draft report to the Task Force setting out the methodology and detailed findings of their study (Part Two of this report) and identifying areas where improvements are required. The Task Force accepted the Consultant's findings and derived additional conclusions and recommendations (Part Three of this report) based on members' extensive knowledge of international research systems and experience in formulating research funding policies. The Task Force concludes that the system in Hong Kong is at a significant stage in its development, and has many strengths and achievements. The RGC has established a system that stands international comparison. As evidenced by the consultancy study, both local and international observers perceive high quality in terms of the research delivered and the processes established.

6. The Task Force believes that the RGC is capable of evolving further and Hong Kong has a strong base for its support of research. The Hong Kong system will continue to face various challenges such as communication and engagement, overall volume of research funding, impact and benefit, and system efficiency. Towards the end of the conclusions, the Task Force also sets out some observations which the UGC and RGC may consider in a possible Phase II Review.

7. The Task Force hopes that this evidence-based report will provide new insights into the operation of the RGC and help map out a way forward for the RGC to reach its next level of achievement.