

RGC funding support for research talents to further strengthen Hong Kong's academic excellence

In recent years, Hong Kong has further consolidated its position as a hub for global research collaboration, providing ample publicly-funded research opportunities for talents who aspire to pursue their careers in the field of research. The city's research and development has been continuously supported by the University Grants Committee (UGC) and its Research Grants Council (RGC) through research funding and fellowship schemes.

Introduced in 2012/13, the Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme (HSSPFS) aims at granting extended time-off and supporting funds to the outstanding investigators in the humanities and social sciences disciplines to enable them to focus on research work and writing. Each year, following a highly competitive and rigorous selection process, up to 10 investigators are awarded fellowships of up to HK\$1 million each. Each awardee will receive support for the employment of relief teachers, cost of travel, subsistence and dissemination of outputs over a period of up to 12 months.

To further enhance Hong Kong's research capacity and competitiveness, the RGC has launched the coveted Senior Research Fellow Scheme (SRFS) and Research Fellow Scheme (RFS) in 2019. With a view to facilitating the full dedication of illustrious researchers across all academic disciplines, as well as nurturing and retaining the next generation of Hong Kong research talents, the two schemes operate annually to provide 10 awards each to researchers at full Professor rank and Associate Professor rank with relief from teaching and administrative duties, and research funding support covering salary costs for relief teachers and young researchers, as well as support for research project.

Through the two schemes, academics can fully dedicate themselves to research and mentoring young researchers, thus bolstering Hong Kong's competitiveness and development for research excellence.



大學教育資助委員會
University Grants Committee



Professor
Scott Veitch

Investigating the relationships between law and digital technology

One of the recipients of the HSSPFS award this year is Professor Scott Veitch, Department of Law, The University of Hong Kong (HKU). His project, 'The End(s) of Normativity: Is technology making law redundant?', assesses the fundamentality of challenges brought by the invisible and non-accountable setting

of technology to conventional legal concepts - responsibility, agency and accountability, and the prospects for the Rule of Law at present and in the future.

"I am delighted to be the recipient of this fellowship as it is a very prestigious recognition for my project," Veitch states. "The fellowship allows me to build on my existing research and publications to pursue new enquiries into the complex relationships between law and digital technology."

Veitch is deeply appreciative of the funding which enables him to visit top-notch universities in London, Edinburgh, Oxford and Cambridge of the UK, attend international conferences and collaborate with foreign partners. "The fellowship is important in supporting me to focus on the research," he adds.

With the support from the HSSPFS, Veitch's research will create a significant impact on the research community in Hong Kong and the wider public. "My research will bring together lawyers and people from the tech community, in the hope that it will enrich both sets of research communities. As legal study is a practical subject and technology is central to contemporary social life, this interdisciplinary project also directly engages citizens who have an interest in both fields."

Veitch hopes that his awarded project will not only contribute to Hong Kong society, but also make an impact internationally through publishing his work on international journals, and developing his research into a book about jurisprudential implications of technology.

With prior experience of studying and working in many jurisdictions abroad, Veitch believes that Hong Kong, in particular, provides strong financial support to the research community. Young talents, according to Veitch, should push their imaginations to the limit no matter they are scientists or humanities scholars. "Being a university researcher, you are free to pursue your passions and your interests. As long as you are willing to work and aspire to be the best you can be, the RGC and universities in Hong Kong always provide strong support to academics," he concludes.



Professor
Ming Ming Chiu

Detecting Fake News in Social Media Networks

Professor Ming Ming Chiu, Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) was awarded a SRFS fellowship for his project 'Detecting COVID-19 Fake News on Social Media across Four Languages: Followers, Emotions, Relationships, and Uncertainty'. His research will examine how fake news spreads within and across online communities. Using this knowledge, he will create a dashboard that monitors messages for the likelihood and threat level of fake news.

"I am deeply honored to receive this Award," Chiu remarks. "Fake news related to COVID-19 has misled people to avoid wearing masks and avoid vaccinations, putting public health at great risk. The support of the SRFS means that I can embark on my research to detect fake news with the vision to reduce the spread of fake news."

One aspect that Chiu appreciates the most is that the Award provides 'time, funding and prestige' for his research. "Not only does the award allow my team to hire researchers with different levels of expertise, but it also raises public awareness of the importance of the issue."

With the support of the SRFS, Chiu's project will create a significant impact on the community. "After analyzing the deceptive writing strategies, we can create (a) a theoretical background to figure out what is fake and true news and (b) a solid evidence base," Chiu explains.

Eventually, the government can utilize the dashboard to investigate and block automated bots or groups of fake news traffickers, as well as warn the general public to be more alert to deceptive writing.

In the future, Chiu hopes that the scope of research can gradually be expanded to determine fake news in many different fields, such as politics or other health issues in different languages. He is also optimistic about the future of research in Hong Kong. "Hong Kong has an open and active research environment and gathers excellent talents from different places."

Chiu encourages young research talents to pay more attention to the problems in their surroundings and find out what they can do to solve them. "Talk to lots of different people, they will help you become better at solving these problems," he advises.



Professor Denise
Tse-shang Tang

Arouse public awareness on the transgender community

Another recipient of the HSSPFS award this year is Professor Denise Tse-shang Tang, Associate Professor, Department of Cultural Studies from Lingnan University (LU). Her project, titled 'Not Just Another Guy: Transgender Men in the Workplace' will study the impact of COVID-19 on transgender men in the workplace of both Hong Kong and Bangkok, Thailand.

"I am absolutely privileged and elated to receive this award which certainly means a lot to me," Tang says. "I am also grateful to the RGC for recognising my inter-Asia research and giving more significance to research regionally."

The award has precious given Tang a full year to focus on her research entirely. "It also allows me to theorize my research over the past two years on this topic and travel to Bangkok to conduct physical interviews with transgender men there, taking my research to another level," she emphasizes.

Her project aims at providing important theoretical implications by contributing to the academic literature on the LGBTQI field. It also touches on how Asian societies perceive the roles of gender, as well as the construction of transgender identities.

"By telling stories about Chinese transgender men, for instance, their difficulties to obtain legal recognition, I hope to arouse public awareness and eventually there might be a way to advocate change or progress in terms of transgender rights," Tang explains. "In the long term, I hope my research can address different aspects of discrimination on transgender persons and can have impact on public policy."

As a scholar specializing in gender and lesbian sexualities, Tang recognises Hong Kong as a highly supportive place for doing research. "Hong Kong has a very vibrant and international academic community, so it should maintain its status as an international city to boost transnational research collaborations."

Tang believes that researchers should persist on their research no matter how small or how non-scalable their fields of research might seem to other researchers. "It may seem to be a lonely journey. But always remember to tell yourself that you are doing something worthy. In the end, the general public will be able to understand your research in a very accessible way," she concludes.