RGC funding brings top Hong Kong researchers to the global stage

大學教育資助委員會 University Grants Committee

Hong Kong solidifies its position as a global hub for leading scholars and world-class researchers to advance their projects with strong public funding support. The University Grants Committee (UGC) and its Research Grants Council (RGC) offer grants and fellowships as well as global collaboration opportunities, empowering both emerging and established scholars in their research endeavors.

Hong Kong Research Collaboration with France

Mrs Christile Drulhe Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau

" Our scientific cooperation has been longstanding and has forged many ties between French and Hong Kong researchers. The ANR/RGC Joint Research Scheme is a key example of what can be done for the advancement of science by joining efforts and funding high quality research projects. For instance, I am very proud to see that the project from the Department of Ocean Science at HKUST together with Sorbonne Université was selected right after the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3) which was held in Nice during the month of June! This year again, the four projects that have been recently selected demonstrate how dynamic our respective academic institutions are." - *Mrs Christile Drulhe, Consul General of France in Hong Kong and Macau*

The French National Research Agency /RGC Joint Research Scheme

Shaping New Norms of Resilient Logistics and Supply Chain

Professor Yong-hong Kuo at HKU

Professor Yong-hong Kuo from the Department of Data and Systems Engineering at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) is the Hong Kong Principal Investigator of a funded project under the research scheme jointly set up by the French National Research Agency (ANR) and RGC (ANR/RGC Joint Research Scheme), which aims to fund collaborative projects of all disciplines between French and Hong Kong research partners.

Kuo's current research, 'Cyber-Physical Internet and Robust Optimisation for Shaping New Norms of Resilient Logistics and Supply Chain', is motivated by the issue of global supply chain disruptions, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, or those impacted by conflicts in the Middle East. He notices that the frequency of such disruptions is increasing, and that there is a need to enhance overall resilience strategies, adjusting to the "new normal".

"We want to develop a general methodology whenever there would be any possible supply chain disruptions, how we can develop a more resilient supply chain plan, or if there are disruptions that take place in our current society, and then how we could respond to such changes," he explained.

When asked about the collaborative aspect of his project, Kuo said that it required a high level of technical expertise from researchers in various domains, such as supply chain management, network science, and operations research. He added that the nature of the project requires a lot of on-site exchange and travelling, and the Joint Research Scheme research grant will provide necessary support to researchers from both France and Hong Kong for research collaboration.

"The key is that we need this group of experts. The other highlight is about the geographic locations of the two teams, where we could model the flow of the network in a more comprehensive manner instead of just focusing on our own region individually," added Kuo.

Kuo expressed his gratitude to the RGC, noting that the funding would support his research team members, including PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. In addition to producing new scientific outcomes, he hopes that they are able to extend the project's deliverables outside the academia so that general community will be able to benefit from their research.

"We hope that eventually, with this strong collaboration between the academics and the industry, we could translate the research into applications and hope that in the future it could bring positive impacts."

Modelling the Ocean's Breath

Professor Julian Mak at HKUST

The Hong Kong Principal Investigator of another funded project under the ANR/RGC Joint Research Scheme is Professor Julian Mak from the Department of Ocean Science at The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST).

His research project, 'Modelling the Ocean's Breath: Improving Mesoscale Representation for Biogeochemical Cycles (MOBIM),' looks into the ocean's ventilation pathways through which oxygen and carbon in the atmosphere goes into the water. Specifically, it focuses on how the oxygen and carbon goes down into the deeper part of the ocean once it is dissolved.

Mak describes the ocean as the "aquatic lungs" of the Earth, as it "serves as a reservoir for sucking in carbon of the atmosphere," making it particularly important for the oxygen and carbon cycles. These cycles play an instrumental role in regulating the Earth's temperature and slowing down the pace of global warming.

The project aims to explore how the "aquatic lungs" in the Southern Ocean near the Antarctic evolve in terms of the oceanic oxygen and carbon cycles, as well as how these processes affect the Earth in the longer term which is critical for humanity's adaptation in the future.

Mak also hoped that this project could be an example demonstrating the efforts and contribution of Hong Kong researchers on global and international issues, albeit the city's small size. "We would use this to showcase there are research talents in Hong Kong who could contribute in large-scale research addressing global concerns. So, the project could help bring Hong Kong to a new height in this area of international research collaboration."

ANR/RGC Joint Research Scheme

RGC Senior Research Fellow Scheme

Pioneering the Future of Trade and Sustainability in International Economic Law

Professor Julien Laurent Chaisse at CityU

Professor Julien Laurent Chaisse from the School of Law at City University of Hong Kong is an awardee of the 2025/26 RGC Senior Research Fellow Scheme (SRFS). His research explores how trade and investment rules need to respond to growth in semiconductors, quantum computing, and artificial intelligence (AI), all of which are not only interrelated but also contribute to one another's further advancement.

"Since the technologies related to semiconductors, quantum computing and AI are crucial to the competitiveness and development of research and employment opportunities in various regions of the world, the race for these technologies is intensifying," says Chaisse.

Chaisse points out that there is a current lack of a global framework or rules on the international trading of semiconductors. He says that while blanket legislation across nations may not be feasible, there are different legal solutions, such as model contracts, which may help stabilise the markets and the use of these technologies while minimising trade tensions.

"We are going to design a free model contract that companies can choose to use at their discretion. Usually, if the model is effective, it will be widely adopted and eventually support a more stable, predictable and profitable industry."

Chaisse shares that the RGC's funding via the fellowship is instrumental for him to nurture the next generation of researchers by involving early-career scholars and postdoctoral researchers in his project. He adds that there are few individuals who can integrate technology and law in research and education. This SRFS research project, which aligns with ongoing technological developments, would provide the early-career academics a valuable opportunity to gain new insights for a novel integrated approach in both research and education of law and technology.

"What I aim to achieve is to involve the new generation of scholars and researchers in the related fields of these latest technologies, empowering them to learn from the comprehensive experience through the SRFS project and other related works, and subsequently they will become capable of teaching their students in future."

SRFS

Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme

Uncovering Histories of Ethnic Minority Workers in Hong Kong

Professor Lisa Yuk-ming Leung at LU

Professor Lisa Yuk-ming Leung from the Department of Cultural Studies at Lingnan University is one of the recipients of the Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme (HSSPFS) award this year. The scheme, first introduced in 2012/13, aims to support scholars in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences by granting them relief from teaching and administrative duties as well as additional research funding support for up to 12 months.

The HSSPFS grant has enabled Leung to undertake more fundamental research and embrace a bolder approach to uncovering the histories of South Asian workers in Hong Kong. The teaching relief provided by the scheme has alleviated her workload, allowing her to devote greater focus and energy to progressing her research. This additional time has not only enhanced her ability to train younger generation researchers but also allowed her to carry out in-depth interviews, which are invaluable in enriching her project.

Her current research is an extension of her past projects. She explains that there's a community of South Asians that came to Hong Kong as economic immigrants from the 1950s to 70s, mostly working in factories at a time when the city needed workers.

"The purpose in uncovering this part of history is, of course, that I want to raise awareness, not just the history, lives and experience of this community in Hong Kong, but also to give due recognition of their economic contributions to Hong Kong," says Leung.

Raising awareness about the community's contributions to the city is at the forefront of her research, "I am hoping to bridge the gaps between ethnic minority communities, and these communities with the Chinese groups, through engagement with NGOs."

Leung had previously conducted research on ethnic minorities working in food delivery, as well as across different job sectors, and shed light on the challenges they face in their daily work.

By uncovering the labour history in her research, Leung hopes to contribute to policy changes that can improve labour conditions for ethnic minorities, but also for workers in general: "I do hope that by establishing labour history, I could also contribute to a more in-depth recognition to improving workers' rights as a whole, and especially those of the ethnic minority workers."

HSSPFS