

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

EARLY CAREER SCHEME (ECS) 2021/22

Explanatory Notes (ECS 2) for completing the Application Form

All applicants should read this Explanatory Notes carefully before completing and submitting your research proposal. The Research Grants Council (RGC) may stop further processing your application if your application is found to be not in compliance with any of the requirements as set out in the Explanatory Notes.

GENERAL

- (a) These notes are intended to be read by applicant(s) / related staff of university(ies) before completion and submission of an ECS application. Please note that item numbers under Parts I to III in these notes correspond to those in the application form.
- (b) The form is in 3 parts, Part I : Summary of the Research Proposal; Part II : Details of the Research Proposal; and Part III : University's Endorsement and Declaration of Research Ethics / Safety.
- (c) For applications which have genuine special needs to be completed in a language other than English, applicant(s) / university(ies) are required to provide an English version on the Abstract and Research Details (Objectives and Long-term Impact, Background of Research and Research Plan, Methodology and Education Plan) in pdf file format.
- (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 following format may lead to disqualification of their applications.**

Font : Times New Roman
Font Size : 12 point
Margin : 2.5 cm all round
Spacing : Single-line spacing

- (e) All sections of the relevant parts should be completed. Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert "N.A." or "Nil".

- (f) When proposals are submitted through the Electronic System, a project reference number will be automatically generated for each of the proposals for identification purposes. The project reference number should be used and quoted in all future correspondence. While an application could be made to a particular panel, the RGC shall have the discretion to decide on the panel responsible for the final assessment of each application.
- (g) Hard copies of each proposal may need to be forwarded to the UGC Secretariat in May 2021. Universities will be notified of the exact number of extra copies needed and the timing in April 2021.
- (h) 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 are found to have exceeded the allowable page / word limits in various sections or have abused the purpose of the “Supporting Documents” in Section 11 of Part II of the application form (apart from the Education Plan and Dissemination Plan, only Letter of Collaboration and supporting documents for the purpose of research ethics/safety approval are allowed to be attached). Applicants should not make use of Section 11 to supplement the contents of other sections.
- (i) It is the obligation of the 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 the disqualification of an application.
- (j) Applicants are not allowed to mention anything not related to the research proposal per se in the application form (such as 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.
- (k) 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.
- (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 Research Offices of the universities on the calculation and

disbursement details separately. PIs are not required to include the calculation of on-costs in the application forms. They have to include the project costs only.

- (m) Unless otherwise stated, all funding levels stated in this application form are in Hong Kong Dollars.

INFORMATION UPDATE

- (n) A brief update of the proposal, if any, should be submitted through the ECS System to the UGC Secretariat on or before 15 April 2021, indicating any significant changes, e.g. changes in the eligibility of the PIs, addition / removal of Co-Investigators, alternative funding obtained, declarations of similar / related proposals / projects, investigator(s)'s 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 proposals substantially. The information update in hard copy should be appended to the proposals (number of copies required and timing will be confirmed separately which should be submitted to the UGC Secretariat.
- (o) If an update is provided for ethics / safety approval for an application, the respective Research Office should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before 15 April 2021. 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.
- (p) If an update is provided for approval for access to Government / official / private data and records for an application, the respective Research Office should submit the relevant updated data to the RGC on or before 15 April 2021. Evidence of approval should also be submitted at this stage.
- (q) If an update is provided on any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, the PI should submit the relevant update to the RGC on or before 15 April 2021.

ENQUIRIES

- (r) Enquiries about the contents of these Explanatory Notes and other related matters about the ECS funding exercise should be directed to the Research Offices of the Universities which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding ECS matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the Research Offices of the Universities.

- (s) The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in ECS applications are at Annex A. Applicants requiring additional information about internal deadlines, application procedures or assistance in completing the application form may contact the Research Offices of their own universities.

- (t) 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 “Extracts from the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance” at https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/rgc/guidelines/code/code_of_conduct.pdf

PART I SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

1. Particulars of the Project

- (a)(i) Applicants are requested to declare under this section if they are within three years of their full time academic job as an Assistant Professor or career equivalent and that they are in substantiation track / tenure track position at the time of submission of the proposal. Grantees and awardees of the ECS are not allowed to apply again. Those who failed in previous ECS exercises are allowed to re-submit applications, which can be a new research topic or research topics previously applied but not supported, within the eligible period.
- (ii) The project title should be informative, but short and concise. For all proposals, the primary and secondary fields of research and codes should be stated clearly under the “Project Title”.
- (iii) All applicants must indicate with caution the nature of the application being submitted. “New” refers to the application on research topic which the PI applies for RGC funds for the first time. “Re-submission” refers to the application on research topic which the PI has previously submitted or largely similar to a proposal that has been submitted to but not supported by the UGC / RGC or other funding agencies. “Continuation” refers to the application continuing the work previously funded by the RGC.
- (b)(i) The primary field area / code should be selected from among the list of field areas / codes as prescribed under the relevant subject area of the assessment panel to which the proposal is submitted. For example, if a proposal's primary field area / code is "Water (2106)", it should come under the subject area of “Civil Engineering, Surveying, Building & Construction (E1)” of the Engineering Panel. The schedules showing the field area descriptions and the corresponding codes are at Annex B(1) to B(5). A maximum of two fields are accepted. To facilitate the appointment of the right experts to evaluate the proposals, a PI should select a specific primary field area as far as possible. If a PI selects a non-specific primary field area, i.e. Others, for his / her proposal, he / she must select a specific secondary field area close to the field area of the proposal.

To indicate the interdisciplinary nature of a proposal, a PI is allowed to select the secondary field area / code from an assessment panel which is different from that of the primary field area / code. Interdisciplinary proposals will be evaluated jointly by experts from different panels. The

RGC reserves the authority to decide whether an application is interdisciplinary or not.

- (ii) Please give a maximum of five keywords to characterise the work of the proposal.
 - (iii) To encourage the applicants who are junior academics to conduct longer term projects, a maximum of 5-year project duration is allowed for applicants in their first year of full time academic job, a 4-year duration for applicants in their second year and a 3-year duration for applicants in their third year, if the proposed duration is deemed appropriate and necessary by the RGC.
- (c) A short abstract of a maximum of 400 words comprehensible to a non-specialist should be typed in the text box. This should be informative and indicative of the nature of the research to be conducted. One A4 page of abstract in standard RGC format should be uploaded as pdf file only when there are special symbols which the system cannot support. If a proposal is funded, the “Abstract of Research” (Abstract) will be mounted 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, or an English version if the original Abstract is presented in Chinese.
- (d) Please refer to Enclosure I for employment of relief teachers under the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel and Enclosure II for support for academic research related to public policy developments.

PART II DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

[To be completed by the applicant(s)]

RESEARCH DETAILS

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 by on the application form.

1. Project Objectives and Pathways to Impact Statement

- (a) The objectives of the project must be presented in point form. 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. 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. On proposals concerning Creative Arts, applicants should ensure that proposals submitted to the RGC should contain research elements which contribute to academic attainments. PIs should approach other funding authorities such as the Hong Kong Arts Development Council if their proposals have no research elements. Project Objectives should be limited to 800 words
- (b) For the purpose of ECS, impact shares the same definition in Research Assessment Exercise 2020, i.e. the demonstrable contributions, beneficial effects, valuable changes or advantages that research qualitatively brings to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life; and that are beyond the academia.

A Pathways to Impact Statement should cover:

- (i) Who are the potential beneficiaries of the proposed research in the short (1-3 years), medium (4-10 years) and long term (over 10 years)?
- (ii) How will the potential beneficiaries benefit? What will be the objective demonstrable / measurable benefits beyond academia?
- (iii) What will be done during and / or after the project to increase the likelihood of achieving the identified benefit and reaching the identified beneficiaries?

The Pathways to Impact Statement should be limited to two A4 pages.

2. Background of Research, Research Plan and Methodology

- (a) State whether work has been / is being carried out by you and / or others on a related subject. Outline previous and alternative approaches to the problem and their deficiencies, 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, the selected approach to the problem solution and a Gantt chart showing the research activities 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. Applicants for longer-term grant (i.e. more than three years) should justify why the proposed research cannot be completed within the normal span of 36 months. All Biology & Medicine proposals should include appropriate sample size and power estimates. For proposals applying funding for clinical trial, a protocol should be submitted in a separate pdf file as an addendum.
- (c) A maximum of two additional A4 non-text pages for diagrams, photos, charts and tables etc, if any.
- (d) The page limit in Sections 1 to 2 does not include references. 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.
- (e) 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. 2023 3Q.

3. Re-submission of a proposal not supported previously

- (a) 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 PI to declare clearly and honestly whether his / her

proposal is a re-submission. 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.

- (b)&(c) This section allows 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 subject panels will take into account the 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.

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, reference books and overseas telephone charges to funded projects.

Threshold Limits for Applications

The lower threshold limits for applications are \$150,000 for projects in the fields of Biology & Medicine, Engineering and Physical Sciences, and \$100,000 for projects in the fields of Business Studies and Humanities & Social Sciences.

Permissible Items

- A detailed budget for the project throughout the project period should be given. Applications for longer-term grant may include a budget for the 4th or 5th year as appropriate. Academic staff remunerated by any UGC-funded universities in Hong Kong must not be paid with honorarium or other form of payments. 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 specifically employed for this project; purchase of equipment necessary for the investigation but not available in the university(ies). In cases where a particular Research Assistant is employed for several projects, his salary should be apportioned accordingly. Detailed justification should be provided, otherwise, the RGC will not consider the request. The “General expenses” item is a catch-all category for costs which cannot be included in any of the other items.

- Part II Section 4 is for indicating the proposed budget for research work only; proposed budget for educational activities such as the training of undergraduate students should be given in the Education Plan at Part II Section 11.

Budget consideration

Applicants are invited to make reference to the average and range of funded amounts under the respective subject panels attached to the call letter available on the RGC website. The budget for the proposals in the field of Biology & Medicine and Engineering will be capped at \$1,200,000. Proposals costing more than \$1,200,000 will still be considered but they must be supported by strong justifications. This budget cap is applicable to Biology & Medicine and Engineering Panels only.

4. Cost and justification

One-line Vote Items

(a)(A)(i) Supporting Staff

Please state the number, rank, and cost and duties of staff involved and the justification. The RGC normally supports research support staff at the Research Assistant (RA) level. Additional justification is required if staff above the RA level are requested. The grant assumes an indicative rate which is currently at \$311,000 per annum for RA and \$499,000 per annum for senior RA (SRA). These indicative rates meant for reference. The indicative rates will be reviewed before the Council decides the supporting level for the applications. The total staff costs supported will then depend on the indicative rates or the rates proposed by the PIs concerned, whichever is lower. In the case of applications for funding for Post-doctoral Fellows, the CV of the post-doc in one A4 page should be attached if available.

Special note for applicants under the Biology & Medicine Panel: the Panel normally supports one full-time equivalent (fte) RA only. If more than

one fte RA and / or staff above the RA level are requested, strong and detailed justification should be provided.

(ii) Equipment

RGC fund must not be used to purchase personal electronic devices such as cell phones, iPod, iPad, MP3 Players, digital cameras and PDAs except with sound justification as approved by the RGC. In addition, the RGC will not provide funding for the purchase or use of standard equipment such as desktop PCs, 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 university's 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 :

- Is the equipment essential to the project?
- Has the department / university already provided such equipment?
- Is there similar equipment elsewhere in other universities and what is the possibility of sharing?
- Provide information in supporting the estimated cost of equipment e.g. quotes from suppliers. Items costing over \$200,000 and without supporting quotations will NOT be considered. Up to two A4 pages can be attached if necessary.

For purchase of equipment at or over \$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 numbers 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 other than the collaborating universities under the application? If yes, please state the extent of shared use by other universities such as the number of hours available for sharing per week.

(iii) Outsourcing 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 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 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 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 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 PIs have to justify in their proposals to the Panels for approval. The corresponding RGC Panels will evaluate the merits and justification of the case according to the conditions specified above. For services / work over \$200,000, price quotations must be provided.

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

(iv) General Expenses

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

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

(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 \$20,000 per year, is normally allowed for each funded project.

Earmarked Items

(a)(B)(vi) Relief Teacher

Applicants under all subject panels 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 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 typical 24 to 36-month project. Relief teachers engaged for this purpose are meant to relieve the 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 justification. It is not necessary to find a relief teacher with equivalent salary, status and experience as the PI concerned. The relief teacher is also not supposed to take up non-teaching related duties, such as purely administrative work, of the PI. In this connection, the universities are requested to confirm that the salaries for the relief teachers proposed by the 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 justification 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 PI's declared teaching load has been verified.

Holders of the grant for employment of relief teacher under UGC / RGC funding schemes are eligible to apply for grant for relief teachers under this scheme by the ECS deadline in November provided he / she submits the completion report of his / her existing project by 15 April in the following year. However, they are still eligible to apply for grant under this scheme if they do not request for relief teachers in the new proposals.

For applicants under the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel, please also see the Supplementary Notes at Enclosure I.

(vii) High-performance Computing Services

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

(viii) Research-related Software Licence / Dataset

For requests for purchase / subscription of database(s) / dataset(s), price quotations should be provided. Requests without quotations may not be considered. The university should not use the RGC Funds to purchase standard software licences / dataset.

(D) Percentage of Research Work related to Public Policy Developments

For proposals involving academic research related to public policy developments, please state the percentage of the requested funding to be deployed in handling research work related to public policy developments.

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

5. Existing facilities and major equipment

Please elaborate the existing facilities and equipment available for this research project.

6. 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 4(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.

7. Particulars of PI

- (a) Each application should be submitted with only one applicant nominated as the PI and no applicant should submit more than one application in this capacity. Eligible applicants may choose to submit their research proposals under the ECS or the General Research Fund (GRF) but not both in each funding cycle. New junior academics falling under the eligibility criteria of the ECS are encouraged to compete in the scheme. The grantees and awardees of ECS cannot compete in the scheme again but those who failed will be allowed to re-submit applications within the eligible period.

Once the application is submitted, a change of PI during the period of processing the application will not be approved.

The PI of an ECS project grant must be an academic staff member of an UGC-funded university with conditions of employment meeting ALL the following requirements:

- (i) within three years of his / her full time¹ academic job as an Assistant Professor or career equivalent involving teaching and research duties and in substantiation track / tenure track position in any university (local or overseas) at the time of the submission deadline of this funding exercise;
- (ii) being primarily engaged in and spending at least 80% of time in degree or higher degree work² at the university proper³; and
- (iii) salary being wholly funded⁴ by the university proper;

For ECS 2021/22, applicants whose appointment in the first full time academic job as an Assistant Professor or career equivalent level in any

¹ Excluding part-time staff and staff holding honorary appointments.

² A Project Investigator 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 ECS.

³ Excluding schools / arms of continuing education and professional training and other analogous outfits.

⁴ Excluding staff members who are receiving income from paid appointments outside the university proper or who are supported by external research grants.

local or overseas university took effect on or after 6 November 2017 and have met other criteria mentioned above will be eligible for Early Career Scheme. A newly appointed staff member should have formally entered into a contract of service with the university on or before the submission deadline of this funding exercise and that their appointments would take effect on or before 16 April 2021.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, cases of exceptional circumstances such as career break due to family or health reasons 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.

Collaborators on the proposal should not be listed as the Co-Investigators of the proposal.

To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of PIs, the PI 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 Gary

* first / given name, then Chinese name in English syllables (hyphenated) or middle name, if any; initials should be avoided.

The applicant should declare whether he / she is a UGC / RGC / Panel / Committee Member as at the deadline of the application.

The applicant is required to provide an ORCID iD to facilitate identification of researchers. ORCID iD can be registered for free at <http://orcid.org>.

- (b) This section should summarize the qualifications of the PI. The CV to be attached should include the following information, as appropriate:

Name, academic qualifications, previous academic positions held (with date(s)) & present position, previous relevant research work, publication records and others including research-related prizes and awards, brief description 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 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 panel's consideration. Failure to comply with the above requirements may lead to disqualification of the concerned application.

Each CV should be limited to either two A4 pages in pdf according to the standard RGC format as stated in point "d" under "General" above or a maximum of 800 words for direct inputting in the text box.

- (c) Please give details of plan of collaboration. The role and specific task(s) of each individual (including the PI and Collaborator(s), if any) in the proposed research should be described clearly.
- (d) Please provide the number of hours per week to be spent on the proposed project.

DECLARATION OF RELATED PROPOSALS & GRANT RECORD

8. Grant Record and Related Research Work of Principal Investigator

It is the responsibility of the PI 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 (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 debaring from applying for future UGC / RGC grants. PIs are required to declare any related research work that is being / has been conducted in relation to the proposal, and provide clarifications that 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 proposals / projects / research work are similar. The judgment of the RGC is final. Therefore, it is always advisable for the PI to declare related research work when there is uncertainty. The PI is advised to make the declaration and elaborate the difference in the proposals / projects to avoid misunderstanding. Declaration of related proposals / projects / research work does not necessarily mean that the proposals concerned will be adversely affected. The RGC may still fund the proposals concerned if the PI is able to justify the differences of the proposals / projects / research work for separate funding.

Please provide details on each of the research projects / proposals undertaken by the PI (in capacity as PI / PC / Co-I / Co-PI) including (i) completed projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC) in the past five years; (ii) on-going projects funded from all sources (irrespective of whether from UGC / RGC); (iii) proposals pending funding approval (irrespective of whether submitted to UGC / RGC). Please also provide the objectives for each of the completed / on-going / pending projects / proposals 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 / Joint Research Schemes projects) under (ii).

The PI should 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 that 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.

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 PI to ensure that the research proposal is carefully reviewed for its compliance with applicable laws, health and safety guidelines and ethical standards. Ethics clearance should be sought for research involving living animals and / or human subjects including 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 PI. The PI's university is required to complete and sign Part III of this application form to confirm whether the research proposal involves human subjects and certify whether the relevant approval is required and if required, 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.

(b) Access to Government / official / private data and records

It is the responsibility of the university and the 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 PI. The PI's university is required to complete and sign Part III of this application form to confirm the relevant approval, if necessary, has been given / is being sought.

For both 9(a) and (b) with the exception of research involving clinical trials, 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 application as being withdrawn if no confirmation of approval is provided to the RGC by 15 April 2021.

If the university / PI declared that no ethics approval was required but the RGC / Panel has turned out to think otherwise, the related application runs the risk of being disqualified.

10. Release of completion report, data archive possibilities and public access of publications resulting from research funded by the RGC

Release of completion report

PIs are required to release the completion reports (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. PI 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.

PIs are required to include in the project completion reports the URL links to the institutional 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 research completion reports the data repositories where research data of their projects could be accessed and shared, where appropriate.

Public access of publications resulting from research funded by the RGC

- (i) Upon acceptance of a paper for publication, the 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 PI should request the publisher to allow him / her to place either version in his / her university's repository for restricted access immediately upon publication or after an embargo period of up to twelve months if required by the publisher; and
- (iii) Subject to the publisher's agreement on (i) or (ii) above, the 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. Education Plan, Technology Transfer Plan and Supporting Documents

Education Plan

Education plans of successful applicants will be assessed anonymously. Applicants should not disclose their own identity or universities in the education plans.

A maximum amount of \$100,000 will be provided to the awardees of ECS for educational activities including the training of undergraduate students at a monthly rate of up to \$2,500 per undergraduate student helper. Only those proposals funded by the ECS will be considered for the grants for educational activities on a merit basis. Applicants should provide a proposal for activities that will strengthen the training of undergraduate students in research. Education plans will be rated “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”. Proposed education plans with “Unsatisfactory” rating will not receive the education grant. Proposed education plans with a “Satisfactory” rating will receive an additional \$50,000 per project for grantees of the ECS Grant and \$100,000 for awardees of the ECS Award. The results of the undergraduate students’ participation in the research projects must be included in the progress report and completion report of the projects.

Technology Transfer Plan (Optional)

To take forward the Director of Audit’s recommendation that a closer link with the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) should be enhanced, applicants are invited to submit an optional technology transfer plan at the application stage. Any funded projects with technology transfer plans submitted will be passed to the Innovation and Technology Commission, who will keep in view these projects for possible ITF support in the future. The technology transfer plan will not be assessed by the RGC for the purpose of funding allocation.

- (a) Activities to be undertaken to:
- disseminate the R&D deliverables;
 - realise the application of the R&D deliverables in the public sector, i.e. the R&D deliverables being used in government departments, public bodies, trade associations, charitable organisations, etc.; and / or
 - market the R&D deliverables in the commercial world, e.g. target markets and customers.
- (b) Potential industry partners for technology transfer / manufacturing. If possible, please provide information in relation to the future positioning of the product / technology in the market.
- (c) Associated / complementary technology development projects which may synergise with this project for technology transfer. In this case, please give some brief information of such project(s).
- (d) Future plans to apply for ITF to support the applied research component of the proposed project.

Supporting Documents

Only supporting documents (e.g. ethics / safety approval letters) are allowed. Applicants should not make use of this section to supplement the contents of other sections. Applications will be disqualified if the proposals are found to have abused the purpose of this section.

PART III UNIVERSITY'S ENDORSEMENT AND DECLARATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS / SAFETY APPROVAL

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

UNIVERSITY'S ENDORSEMENT

1. Staff eligibility requirement for ECS

Universities are responsible for interpreting whether the applicants are at the substantiation track / tenure track and in Assistant Professor or career equivalent level with reference to the established ranks in their Universities. The university should confirm that it has evaluated and given support to the application before submission to the RGC. The university is also required to confirm that (i) a PI fully meets the criteria for the ECS grant, including the eligibility rules of requesting relief support under special funding template for Humanities and Social Sciences Panel; (ii) the salary for the relief teacher proposed by the PI not exceeding the salary of Staff Grade 'G' as set out in the Supplementary Notes for Applicants of ECS for Relief Support under the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel; (iii) the existing teaching load is verified; and (iv) the applicant will have the number of hours per week as declared in Part II Section 7(d) 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 PI subsequently becomes ineligible for the grant.

UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENTS

2. Support to PI and students

The university should confirm that research student(s) (MPhil / PhD) would be put under the primary supervision of the applicant for at least one semester during the project period.

The university is required to verify and confirm whether the ECS application is in line with its role, and that adequate supervision, research facilities and training provisions are in place to meet the need of RPg 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 PI of the RGC grant is to complete the project according to plan and that the training of RPg students and / or undergraduate students should not be used to justify any delay of project completion nor unsatisfactory project performance.

For items (e) to (h), please see the notes for Sections 4(b), (d) and (e) in 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 or the use of living animal or human subjects, including those in social sciences research (e.g. potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human subjects in a research project, subjects' privacy etc). It should be noted that all applications must be vetted by the universities to ascertain if they involve human subjects. For applications involving clinical trials, PIs are allowed to obtain relevant ethics approval before the release of funding and project commencement. For other non-clinical applications involving human subjects, the universities must give approval / exemption according to their internal ethics guidelines by 15 April 2021 as is the case with other ethics / safety approval. If the institution is unable to confirm by 15 April 2021 that the required approval has been obtained, the RGC will stop processing the application which will be regarded as to have been withdrawn.
- (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 15 April 2021 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 / PI declared that no approval was required but the RGC / Panel eventually considered otherwise, the related application may be disqualified.

Part III should be completed and submitted by the appropriate administrative authority or responsible person(s) in the university.

UGC Secretariat
August 2020

Handling of Information and Personal Data
Contained in RGC Research Funding Application

Purpose of Collection of Information and Personal Data

1. Information and personal data contained in your research grant application are collected for the following purposes:

- (a) determination of your eligibility, as a staff member of a UGC-funded university, to apply for a competitive grant from the Research Grants Council (RGC);
- (b) assessment of the merits of the research proposal which you have submitted for funding support;
- (c) assisting the RGC subject panels in identifying external reviewers to assess your research proposal;
- (d) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by the RGC / UGC in relation to the use of public funds;
- (e) sharing of data with other government departments / research funding agencies for the avoidance of duplicate funding; and
- (f) for successful projects, such data will be used for project monitoring, promotion, publicity and may also be published on the RGC website.

Handling of your information and personal data

2. Your research proposal including your personal data (e.g. CVs) will be handled with care by the RGC. Staff of the UGC Secretariat, members of the RGC and RGC panels, local and non-local reviewers, and other parties who may be involved in the processes described in Paragraph 1 above will be allowed access to the data on a need-to-know basis but they will be placed under a duty of confidentiality to the RGC. Information so collected by the RGC will not be used for any other purposes. If you want to exclude any individuals from access to your research proposal, you should inform the RGC separately when you submit your research proposal. The RGC does not accept research proposals that are classified “confidential” by the PIs. It also reserves the right to stop processing or reject any applications if the applicants’ requests render it impossible for the applications to be adequately peer-reviewed.

3. When the RGC obtains external assessments on your research proposal, external reviewers will be made aware of the existence of a Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance in Hong Kong, and be forewarned that all written comments about the applicant and research proposal are liable to be released to the applicant concerned upon request. External reviewers will also be advised of the RGC policy on providing feedback to grant applicants described in paragraph 4 below.

4. Applicants should note the following:

- (a) all proposals will have undergone a very rigorous peer-review process which involves external assessments and the relevant RGC panels / committees which are made up of experts from the local and international academic / professional community;
- (b) grants are allocated on a competitive basis and each year is a different exercise (the success rate is based on the general quality of the proposals as assessed by the relevant RGC panels / committees, and the availability of funds, in that particular year);
- (c) the RGC is gradually raising the quality threshold, meaning that only the top and the best quality proposals will be “funded”; and
- (d) comments from all external reviewers on each proposal (except for conference grants / travel grants / fellowship applications) will be provided anonymously to the applicants concerned through their universities.

Physical retention of applications

5. Applications that are funded by the RGC will be retained at the UGC Secretariat for periodic review of progress and final assessment of the research investigation and outcome, with the assistance of external reviewers where appropriate.

Right of Access to Personal Data

6. Notwithstanding the arrangement described above, nothing in this note will affect your legal right to request access to personal data held by the RGC about you or your research proposal and to update or correct such data. Nevertheless, the RGC reserves the right to charge a reasonable fee for the processing of any such request(s) in accordance with the prevailing Government regulations.

Further Information

7. All requests for access to your personal data or correction of your personal data or for information regarding policies and practices and kinds of personal data held by the RGC should be made in writing, by post or by fax, addressed as follows:

Assistant Secretary General (Research)1
Research Grants Council
7/F Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong

Fax: 2845 1183

* * * * *

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Biology & Medicine Research Proposals**

Biological Sciences

(Subject Area: M1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Behaviour and Psychology	1101
Biochemistry	1102
Cell Biology	1103
Developmental Biology	1104
Ecology	1105
Environmental Research	1106
Food Science	1107
Gene Regulation	1108
Genomic Biology	1109
Growth & Development	1110
Marine Biology	1111
Microbiology	1112
Molecular Biology	1113
Morphology and Anatomy	1114
Physiology	1115
Signal Transduction	1116
Structural Biology	1117
Traditional Chinese Medicine (basic)	1119
Ageing	1120
Biodiversity and Systematics	1121
Bioinformatics, Systems and Synthetic Biology	1122
Biological Imaging	1123
Brain Pain Learning and Memory	1124
Comparative Endocrinology	1125
Comparative Immunology	1126
Fish Biology	1127
Genetics	1128
Neuroscience	1129
Plant Sciences/ Plant Biology	1130
Stem Cell Biology	1131
Virology	1132
Others (please specify:)	1199

Medicine, Dentistry & Health
(Subject Area: M2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Allergy/Immunology	1201
Anaesthesia	1202
Blood/Hematology	1203
Cancer	1204
Cardiovascular Research	1205
Clinical Trials	1206
Connective Tissues	1207
Dentistry	1208
Diabetes/Metabolism	1209
Endocrinology	1210
Epidemiology	1211
Gastroenterology/Hepatobiliary	1212
Genetic Disease	1213
Geriatrics/Gerontology	1214
Health Services	1215
Hearing	1216
Imaging	1217
Infection/Parasitology	1218
Neonatology	1219
Nephrology/Urology	1220
Nursing	1222
Nutrition	1223
Orthopaedics/Traumatology	1224
Paediatrics	1225
Pathology	1226
Pharmacology/Toxicology	1227
Population Health	1228
Psychosocial & Behavioural Research	1229
Reproduction	1231
Respiration	1232
Rheumatology	1233
Surgical Research	1234
Transplantation	1235
Vision	1236
Chinese Medicine (clinical)	1237
Proteomics	1238
Regenerative Medicine	1239
Molecular Diagnostics	1240

Medicine, Dentistry & Health (Cont'd)
(Subject Area: M2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Biomedical Engineering	1241
Biomaterials	1242
Clinical Microbiology	1243
Clinical Virology	1244
Disease Model Development	1245
Drug Discovery and Delivery	1246
Drug Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics	1247
Genomic Medicine	1248
Genomics	1249
Human Genetics/Clinical Genetics	1250
Neurobiology and Neuromedicine	1251
Personalized Medicine	1252
Rehabilitative and Physical Medicine	1254
Stem Cell Therapy	1256
Others (please specify:)	1299

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Engineering Research Proposals**

Civil Engineering, Surveying, Building & Construction
(Subject Area: E1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Building & Construction	2101
Environmental	2102
Geotechnical	2103
Structure	2104
Surveying	2105
Water	2106
Transportation	2107
Urban Development	2108
Others (please specify:)	2199

Computing Science & Information Technology
(Subject Area: E2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Computer Science Fundamentals	2202
Computing Hardware	2203
Network	2205
Software	2206
Speech & Language	2207
Vision	2208
Bioinformatics	2209
Visualization & Graphics	2210
Information Analytics	2211
Data Mining	2212
Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning	2213
Database and data science	2214
Others (please specify:)	2299

Electrical & Electronic Engineering
(Subject Area: E3)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Communication	2301
Electronics	2302
Photonics	2303
Signal & Image Processing	2305
Bioelectronics	2306
Power Electronics	2307
Power System	2308
Microwave and Terahertz Engineering	2309
Others (please specify:)	2399

Mechanical, Production & Industrial Engineering
(Subject Area: E4)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Design	2401
Engineering Management	2402
Fluid	2403
Marine Engineering	2404
Materials	2405
Mechanics & Dynamics	2406
Operations Research	2407
Production & Manufacturing	2408
Robotics & Automation	2409
Textile	2410
Thermal	2411
Biomechanics	2412
Fuel Engineering	2413
Others (please specify:)	2499

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Physical Sciences Research Proposals**

Chemical Engineering

(Subject Area: P1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Chemical Engineering	3101
Biophysics	3102
Energy	3103
Environmental Sciences	3104
Biochemical Engineering	3105
Food Science and Technology	3106
Others (please specify:)	3199

Physical Sciences

(Subject Area: P2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Chemical Sciences	3201
Earth Sciences	3202
Materials Sciences	3204
Physics	3205
Planetary Sciences	3206
Physical Geography	3207
Scattering Methods	3208
Nanomaterials	3209
Nanocomposites	3210
Mass Spectrometry	3211
Environmental Studies and Science	3212
Others (please specify:)	3299

Mathematics

(Subject Area: P3)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Applied Mathematics	3301
Pure Mathematics	3302
Probability & Statistics	3303
Mathematical Finance and Insurance	3304
Others (please specify:)	3399

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Humanities and Social Sciences Research Proposals**

Psychology and Linguistics

(Subject Area: H1)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Psychology	4104
Linguistics and Languages	4108
Psycholinguistics	4109
Cognitive Neuroscience of Language	4110
Language Development, Second Language Acquisition, Audiology	4123
Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis	4124
Criminology	4125
Others – relating to Psychology and Linguistics (please specify:)	4196

Social and Behavioural Sciences

(Subject Area: H2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Anthropology	4101
Public Administration & Political Science	4105
Sociology	4106
Architecture	4401
Law	4402
Nursing	4408
Public Health	4409
Social Work	4410
Social Services/Management	4411
Urban Studies and Planning	4412
Visual Design (including advertising, graphic, visual communication, digital media)	4414
Product Design (including fashion. industrial, product)	4415
Environmental Design (including interior design, space design)	4416

Social and Behavioural Sciences (Cont'd)
(Subject Area: H2)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Archaeology	4417
Human Geography	4418
Social Policy	4419
Others – relating to Social and Behavioural Sciences (please specify:)	4195

Humanities and Arts
(Subject Area: H3)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Media and Communication	4151
Literature	4204
Creative Arts: Dance	4207
Creative Arts: Dramatic Arts	4208
Creative Arts: Music	4209
Creative Arts: Visual Arts (including Drawing, Painting, Sculpture, Film and Photography)	4210
Creative Arts: Writing	4211
Film, Visual and Media Studies	4221
History	4213
History of Arts	4214
Musciology/Music History	4215
Translation Studies	4216
Cultural Studies / Cultural Policy	4222
Philosophy	4218
Religious Studies	4219
Sexuality and Gender Studies	4220
Journalism and Media	4407
Contemporary Art	4420
Area Studies (including Japanese Studies, China Studies, European Studies)	4421
Chinese History (including Socio-economic, Military, Legal Social and Cultural History)	4422
Classical Chinese, Chinese Thought and Paleography	4423
Hong Kong Studies	4424
Others – relating to Humanities and Arts (please specify:)	4299

Education

(Subject Area: H4)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Education: Policy & Administration	4301
Education: Research on Teaching & Learning	4302
Education: Language and Literature	4303
Education: Theory and Applications	4304
Others – relating to Education (please specify:)	4399

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Business Studies Research Proposals**

Business Studies

(Subject Area: B)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Accounting	5101
Economics	5102
Finance	5103
Information System Management	5104
Management	5105
Marketing	5106
Operational Research	5107
Operations Management	5108
International Business	5109
Tourism and Hotel Management	5110
Econometrics and Business Statistical Methods	5111
Risk and insurance management	5112
Others (please specify:)	5199