

Operation Guide for the RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme (PDFS)

Introduction

As announced in the 2018 Policy Address, the Government would reserve recurrent funding in support of the Research Grants Council (RGC) to introduce three new regular fellowship schemes in 2019/20 academic year for open nominations, namely RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme (PDFS), RGC Research Fellow Scheme (RFS) and RGC Senior Research Fellow Scheme (SRFS), which will benefit post-doctoral fellows as well as researchers at associate professor and professor ranks respectively. This Operation Guide sets out the implementation principles and detailed guidelines of the PDFS.

Objectives

2. The PDFS aims at providing promising local and non-local postdoctoral researchers at UGC-funded universities with support at a pivotal time in their very early career, so as to incentivise young research talent to build up a career in the field of research and development (R&D) in Hong Kong.

3. To build up a pool of local research talent to sustain Hong Kong's competitiveness and propel the development of our higher education sector, it is desirable that local doctoral graduates are well covered and can benefit from the PDFS. While the PDFS will remain competitive in nature, it is proposed that a quota of half of the awardees will be reserved for local candidates in each exercise, i.e. for candidates who are, at the time of nomination, Hong Kong permanent residents enjoying the right of abode in Hong Kong as defined under the Immigration Ordinance¹. Under the principle of merit-based selection, should the quota for local candidates not being fully utilised in a particular exercise after exhausting every effort in selecting local candidates, consideration will be given to release the quota for suitable non-local candidates in the exercise concerned. This arrangement will be subject to review as and when required.

4. PDFS will provide support to 50 awardees (encompassing all academic disciplines grouped into two broad academic streams in each round of the yearly exercise, following the arrangement of Hong Kong PhD Fellowship

¹ For definition of Hong Kong permanent residents under the Immigration Ordinance, please refer to <https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/roa/eligible.html>

Scheme) for a period of 36 months in terms of full-time appointment as Postdoctoral Fellow (PdF) at a University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded university. The two broad academic streams are as follows:

- (i) Science, Medicine, Engineering and Technology (S disciplines); and
- (ii) Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies (H disciplines)

Coverage and Eligibility

Supporting University

5. All eight UGC-funded universities are eligible to make nomination for the fellowship in support of full-time employment of PdF for research projects / activities. Each university may nominate up to 12 PdF candidates (PDFS nominees) and is required to specify in the nomination the research project(s) / activities to be assigned to the PDFS nominee during the fellowship period.

PDFS Nominee

6. To qualify for the fellowship, the PDFS nominee must:
- (a) obtain a legal right to work and reside in Hong Kong during the fellowship period;
 - (b) have obtained / been conferred a PhD degree or an equivalent qualification not more than three years before the year of nomination², or will complete the requirement of a PhD degree or an equivalent qualification by the 31 August of the following year of nomination; and
 - (c) be supported by a UGC-funded university at which he / she wishes to hold the fellowship.

The PDFS nominee should be a graduate in the relevant field of the research project(s) / activities to which he / she is to be assigned.

² For instance, for nomination exercise to close by October 2020, the nominee must have obtained/been conferred a PhD degree or an equivalent qualification on or after 1 January 2017.

Fellowship Award

7. For each PDFS awardee, the supporting university will receive an annual stipend³ to cover the awardee's basic salary as well as a conference and research-related travel allowance throughout the 36-month fellowship period. Supporting universities are welcome to supplement the fellowship with other fringe benefits on par with ordinary employment of a PdF, on top of the stipend to attract outstanding candidates.

8. Each awardee will be allowed to accept a full-time appointment as PdF at the supporting university. For awardees applying for / currently receiving other employment subsidy via the same research project(s) supported by other local public funding under the UGC, RGC, Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), etc., they shall decide to receive either the fellowship for full-time employment under the PDFS or other employment subsidy to avoid "double funding".

9. Nevertheless, awardees are allowed, during the fellowship period, to hold concurrent grant(s) (except grant(s) in the form of fellowship) awarded by the UGC / RGC or other funding agencies on research project(s) other than that under the PDFS. Awardees accepting the fellowship shall not compete again in future exercises. Universities may make repeated nominations for non-selected candidates.

Selection Criteria

10. Selection is based on:
- (a) the candidate's academic record of excellence;
 - (b) the candidate's research ability and track record to date;
 - (c) the candidate's leadership potential in the field;
 - (d) the merit of the proposed research project(s) / activities;
 - (e) potential impact of the proposed research project(s) / activities;
and
 - (f) university support.

³ The first annual stipend for 2021/22 exercise is HK\$405,330 (inclusive of the travel allowance at HK\$12,880). The amount of the annual stipend will be adjusted after every 12 months during the fellowship period with reference to the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI) and related factors, and supporting universities will be informed of the updated rate in April / May every year.

Selection Panel

11. The two selection panels formed under the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme, i.e. Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies Selection Panel (H-Panel) and Science, Medicine, Engineering and Technology Selection Panel (S-Panel), will be enlisted for assessment of nominations and selection of awardees under the PDFS with respect to the two broad academic streams (H disciplines and S disciplines) respectively.

Nomination Process

12. PDFS nominations should be made by universities via their Research Office using the PDFS nomination form, on which universities should indicate the institutional support with detailed comments, and PDFS nominees should include their research plan, if applicable, detailing the research project(s) / activities to be undertaken within the fellowship period. Prior to submitting a PDFS nomination to the UGC Secretariat, the supporting university is advised to conduct interview assessment with the potential nominee on his / her academic strength, research ability and potential, degree of fitness, leadership, etc., and provide the assessment results and related information in the nomination form for the selection panel's information / reference. Further details and explanatory notes of the nomination process are provided on the RGC website. Call letter will be issued to Heads of Universities by August and nominations should reach the UGC Secretariat by the end of October. Candidates submitting application direct to the UGC Secretariat will not be considered.

Assessment Process by the RGC

13. The UGC Secretariat will vet the nominations received and seek clarifications from universities as necessary. After that, the panel chair concerned will assign at least two reviewers (the first reviewer and second reviewer) for each nomination among the panel members, taking into account their expertise. To ensure all nominations are competing on a level playing field, a blind review process is adopted for local reviewers to avoid possible conflicts of interest. The reviewers are required to complete the preliminary assessment of nominations independently.

14. The UGC Secretariat will then consolidate all the assessments received and prepare relevant information to facilitate panel discussion on each nomination in detail. The panel discussion will be steered by the panel chair at the selection panel meetings to be held in Hong Kong (or via video conferencing under special circumstances) in the following February / March after the close of nomination. Announcement of results will be made to the universities in the ensuing month.

Time Table / Processing Cycle (for reference only)

Timeline	Milestone
August (<i>Year n</i>)	Announcement of the launch of PDFS with call for nomination
end-October (<i>Year n</i>)	Close of nominations from universities
December (<i>Year n</i>)	- Formation of selection panels (following the arrangement of Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme) - Assignment of nominations to panel members (reviewers) by panel chair
January (<i>Year n+1</i>)	Preliminary assessment of nominations by panel members (reviewers)
February / March (<i>Year n+1</i>)	Final assessment of nominations at selection panel meetings (or via video conferencing under special circumstances)
April (<i>Year n+1</i>)	- Announcement and notification of PDFS results - PDFS awardees to start the 36-month fellowship with a full-time PdF appointment at the supporting university within year n+1 (to start earliest on 1 May and latest by 31 December)

Disbursement Arrangements

15. By accepting the fellowship, the PDFS awardee will undertake and start the 36-month fellowship, with a full-time PdF appointment at the supporting university within the year of result announcement (to start earliest on 1 May and latest by 31 December), and the annual stipend will be allocated to the supporting university annually via a designated bank account. The supporting university will sign grant undertaking and agree to abide by all the relevant UGC / RGC guidelines, and is thereby responsible to offer basic salary and the conference and research-related travel allowance with reference to the stipend level as stipulated in paragraph 7 above, as well as other fringe benefits, to the awardee throughout the 36-month fellowship period.

16. The conference and research-related travel allowance, as inclusive in the annual stipend, is an earmarked item which should only be used to meet the expenses of the designated purpose, i.e. to attend recognised international academic conferences. Paper presentation in an academic conference is not an eligibility criterion required by the RGC. While the allowance is accounted for separately, it can be carried forward within the fellowship period.

17. Any unspent balance of and interest income from the fellowship stipends should be returned to the UGC Secretariat in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements for Funding Schemes Administered by the Research Grants Council (DAMA).

Monitoring / Reporting Requirements

18. Awardees will be required to submit annual progress reports on all on-going research project(s) / activities through the supporting university to the UGC Secretariat for monitoring. The reporting period should end at the immediate 30 June on or after the completion of every 12 months of the fellowship. Annual progress reports should reach the UGC Secretariat within three months from the end of the reporting period (i.e. 30 September). An awardee's eligibility for the fellowship may be reviewed during the fellowship period with reference to the annual progress report(s).

19. Upon completion of the 36-month fellowship period, awardees should submit a completion report through the supporting university to the UGC Secretariat not later than six months from the end of the fellowship.

20. If an awardee resigns from his / her full-time PdF appointment and accept a full-time appointment at another post (for instance, as Assistant Professor) in the supporting university before the end of the fellowship period, the fellowship shall prematurely terminate as it is only designated for PdF appointment. The supporting university shall return the unspent balance of the fellowship stipends to the UGC Secretariat in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the DAMA. The awardee shall submit a concluding report through the supporting university to the UGC Secretariat not later than six months from the termination of fellowship.

21. In the event that an awardee's employment at the supporting university is terminated of his / her own accord (i.e. resignation) or by the supporting university before the end of the fellowship period, the fellowship shall prematurely terminate. As it is offered on personal basis, the fellowship cannot be transferred between persons. The supporting university shall return the unspent balance of the fellowship stipends to the UGC Secretariat in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the DAMA. The awardee shall submit a concluding report through the supporting university to the UGC Secretariat not later than six months from the termination of fellowship.

22. If an awardee changes his / her PdF appointment from the supporting university to a PdF appointment at another UGC-funded university, normally the fellowship cannot be transferred. Nevertheless, provided that the current university has reached a mutual consensus with the receiving university, and an undertaking has been made by the receiving university to confirm that it will manage the fellowship based on the same research project(s) / activities, the current university should report the change in appointment status of the awardee and submit the request for transfer to the UGC Secretariat for prior approval. Subject to approval, the fellowship will then be allowed to transfer with the awardee to the receiving university. However, the fellowship cannot be transferred if an awardee changes his / her PdF appointment from the supporting UGC-funded university to a self-financing local degree-awarding institution.

23. Request for extension of the fellowship period will be considered on a case-by-case basis to cater for exceptional circumstances, for instance, if an awardee is accorded overseas scholarship or offer as visiting scholar / researcher in overseas during the fellowship period, or on leave for a continuous or

cumulative period exceeding 183 days (on prolonged leave) within the fellowship period. The supporting university should submit the request for extension with supporting documents to the UGC Secretariat for consideration and approval. Following the approval for extension, the disbursement of fellowship stipend will be suspended until the awardee resumes the fellowship after the overseas tour / prolonged leave. Cases seeking covering approval for extension will not be considered.

24. In the event that any misrepresentation, fraudulent, and non-disclosure of information during the nomination stage / fellowship period is detected, the fellowship shall be terminated immediately and the awardee concerned is liable to refund in full the fellowship stipends paid under the PDFS.

25. This operation guide may be updated / revised from time to time by the RGC. In the event that changes are made, the updated operation guide will always supersede earlier versions.

UGC Secretariat
August 2020 (updated)

RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme (PDFS) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Duration

1. Will a longer fellowship period be considered to allow PDFS awardees more time to complete their study and apply for at least a couple of rounds of grants?

The duration of fellowship period for PDFS will be reviewed as and when required.

2. Will a shorter fellowship period be considered to allow increasing the number of quota for the scheme or allow flexibility for postdoctoral commitment in different disciplines?

The duration of fellowship period for PDFS will be reviewed as and when required.

Quota

3. Will the number of places be increased in later exercises?

The number of awards/places will be reviewed as and when required.

4. As half of the places will be reserved for local candidates, will the other half of the places be designated for non-local candidates? Or will the remaining local candidates be considered together with the non-locals for the other half of the places?

Selection is competitive in nature. If the quota reserved for local candidates is filled up, merit-based selection will again apply for the remaining places.

5. Is there any quota allocation for the 50 places between (i) Science, Medicine, Engineering and Technology and (ii) Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies?

There is no pre-set allocation quota between the two broad academic categories. The principle of merit-based selection should apply.

Eligibility

6. Will there be any age limit or constraint on the maximum number of years of obtaining a PhD degree for the nominee?

There is no restriction in terms of age, while the nominee should have obtained/been conferred a PhD degree or an equivalent qualification not more than three years before the year of nomination (e.g. for nomination exercise to close by October 2020, the nominee must have obtained/been conferred a PhD degree or an equivalent qualification on or after 1 January 2017).

7. Is the PDFS nominee required to be a graduate/PhD student from the supporting university?

There is no restriction in this regard.

8. In the operation guide, it is mentioned that "*for awardees applying for/currently receiving other employment subsidy via the same project(s) supported by other local public funding under the UGC, RGC, Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), etc., they shall decide to receive either the fellowship for full-time employment under the PDFS or other employment subsidy to avoid double funding.*" Does the restriction only apply to the "local public funding"? Will a nominee who is receiving employment subsidy from (a) overseas funding, or (b) private funding, or (c) donation be eligible to receive the PDFS if he/she still uses the said funding (a)/(b)/(c)?

The restriction only applies to local public funding with examples enumerated in the operation guide. Universities are welcome to top up PDFS with overseas funding, private funding or donation.

9. If a PdF is receiving university's internal funding (say, from UGC block grant) as employment subsidy to conduct the same project, or receiving other employment subsidy on research projects/activities that are not covered by or overlapping with PDFS, will he/she be eligible to be nominated for PDFS?

For PDFS candidates receiving UGC block grant as employment subsidy to conduct the same project, remuneration from this subsidy should cease if they decide to receive the fellowship/employment under the PDFS on the same project (i.e. no overlapping/double funding). Nevertheless, there is no such restriction if the other employment subsidy they are receiving is on research projects/activities other than that under PDFS.

10. Is the nominee required to be employed by the supporting university at the time of nomination?

The nominee is not required to be an existing employee of the supporting university at the time of nomination but he/she needs to be employed by the supporting university when the fellowship is awarded.

11. Are existing post-doctoral fellows (or who have previously held PdF or Assistant Professor titles) eligible to be nominated for PDFS?

There is no restriction on previous/current employment of the candidates.

12. Is an awardee of the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme, who will complete the PhD degree by the 31 August of the following year of PDFS nomination, allowed to be nominated for PDFS?

Awardees of Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme fulfilling the nomination requirements under PDFS are eligible to be nominated for PDFS.

13. Will PDFS awardees be eligible to be considered for the RGC Research Fellow Scheme (RFS) and/or RGC Senior Research Fellow Scheme (SRFS) in future exercise(s)?

PDFS awardees can be considered for RFS/SRFS in future exercise(s) subject to fulfilling the requirements as set out for RFS/SRFS. RFS awardees can be considered for SRFS in future exercise(s) subject to fulfilling the requirements as set out for SRFS. An awardee can only

benefit from one of the three schemes at any one time. Awardees accepting a fellowship shall not compete again for the same fellowship in future exercises.

Selection Panel

14. For disciplines with applied nature like Design, Health and Allied Health Sciences, will there be inclusion of at least one member of the related field in the selection panel?

Panel membership for PDFS will follow the existing selection panels formed under the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme, i.e. Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies Selection Panel (H-Panel) and Science, Medicine, Engineering and Technology Selection Panel (S-Panel). Panel members will be added as necessary.

Award

15. Will the annual stipend proposed for PDFS awardee (and the research-related travel allowance) be increased to enhance its attractiveness?

The amount of the fellowship stipend will be adjusted after every 12 months during the fellowship period with reference to the annual rate of Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI) and related factors, and will be reviewed as and when required in future exercises.

16. If the annual stipend of PDFS is deemed less than sufficient to cover the salary of a PdF, are universities allowed to use (a) overseas funding, or (b) private funding, or (c) donation to support the shortfall of the salary cost?

Universities may top up the fellowship stipend using non-public funding including but not limited to overseas funding, private funding, and/or donation. To avoid "double funding", if a PDFS candidate is receiving UGC block grant as employment subsidy to conduct the same project, remuneration from this subsidy should cease if he/she decides to receive the fellowship/employment under the PDFS on the same project.

17. Will the employer's contribution to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) and the yearly General Pay Adjustment, which are normally tied in with the salary, be covered by the annual stipend?

Universities are welcome to supplement the fellowship with other fringe benefits on par with ordinary employment of a PdF, on top of the stipend, including MPF, pay adjustment, etc. The amount of the fellowship stipend will be adjusted after every 12 months during the fellowship period with reference to the annual rate of Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI) and related factors, and will be reviewed as and when required in future exercises.

Appointment as PdF

18. When is the university expected to make an offer, before or after the nomination, as it will take a considerable period of time from submission of nomination to receiving the result in the following year?

It is up to the university to decide bearing in mind that the 3-year employment as PdF sponsored under PDFS should commence within the year of result announcement (to start earliest on 1 May and latest by 31 December).

19. Are PDFS awardees expected to conduct independent studies or get involved in a funded research project?

Under the principle of institutional autonomy, details of the research project(s)/study(ies) are subject to the agreement between the PDFS awardee and the supporting university.

20. Do PDFS awardees need to sign an undertaking with the supporting university to continue their service for a certain period upon completion of the PDFS fellowship?

Under the principle of institutional autonomy, any undertaking for continual service upon completion of the PDFS fellowship should be subject to mutual agreement between the awardee and the supporting university.

Monitoring/Reporting

21. What are the reporting requirements?

PDFS awardees will be required to submit annual progress reports on all on-going research project(s)/activity(ies) through the university concerned to the UGC Secretariat for monitoring. Upon completion of the 36-month fellowship period, awardees should submit a completion report through the university concerned to the UGC Secretariat.

22. Is it necessary to submit a separate statement of accounts apart from the completion report?

In accordance with RGC's existing Disbursement, Accounting and Monitoring Arrangements for Funding Schemes Administered by the RGC, a statement of accounts should be submitted separately.

23. Will outside practice or other research engagements with industries be allowed within the PDFS fellowship period?

Outside practice or other research engagements with industries are not restricted during the fellowship period, provided that they are in compliance with the related internal guidelines of the supporting university.

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL (RGC)

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP SCHEME (PDFS) 2021/22

Explanatory Notes (PDFS-2) for completing the Nomination Form

All nominees and supporting universities should read this *Explanatory Notes* as well as the *Operation Guide for the RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme* carefully before completing and submitting the nomination. The RGC may stop further processing your nomination if it 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 the nominee / related staff of supporting university before completion and submission of a PDFS nomination.
- (b) The nomination form (PDFS-1) contains 10 sections from A to J. **All sections of the form should be completed. The nominee is required to complete Sections A to H, and the supporting university should complete Sections I and J.** Where information sought is not applicable or not provided under a particular section, insert “NA” or “Nil”. The section numbers in these notes correspond to those in the nomination form. Not all sections are explained in these notes.
- (c) In order to ensure consistency and fairness, all nominees and supporting universities must complete the nominations, **including attached pdf documents**, in the following standard RGC format. **Failure to comply with the following format may lead to disqualification of nominations.**

Font : Times New Roman

Font Size : 12 point

Margin : 2.5 cm all round

Spacing : Single-line spacing

PDF version: compatible with Adobe Acrobat Reader 5

- (d) **The deadline for submission of nomination is 5:00 p.m. of 30 October 2020 (Friday).** One soft copy in text-searchable PDF (with related PDF attachments if applicable) (via email to PDFS@ugc.edu.hk) and two hard copies (including the original version) of each nomination are required to reach the UGC Secretariat by the deadline. The content of the soft and hard copies must be identical. Please name the soft copy using the RGC reference number. The soft

copy of the nomination should be saved in one CD/DVD/ USB memory stick as far as possible. Late submission will not be entertained.

- (e) The RGC reference number should be used and quoted in all future correspondence. The number is in the format of **“PDFS2122” + dash “ – ” + one-digit university code + selection panel code (“H” or “S”) + two-digit ordinal number (e.g. PDFS2122-3H01)**. Details of the last three components of the number are set out as follows:

(i) One-digit university code

Please refer to the list below:

1. City University of Hong Kong
2. Hong Kong Baptist University
3. Lingnan University
4. The Chinese University of Hong Kong
5. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
6. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
7. The University of Hong Kong
8. The Education University of Hong Kong

(ii) Selection panel code

H – Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies Panel

S – Science, Medicine, Engineering and Technology Panel

(iii) Two-digit ordinal number

It indicates the order of nomination case(s) made by the supporting university for each selection panel in this exercise (e.g. H01 to H05 and S01 to S07).

- (f) In view of the substantial amount of data involved, the supporting university is required to submit the nominations together with a summary of critical information (in Excel table format, template to be provided to the Research Office under separate cover by email) on all nominations made in this exercise. The completed critical data file (in Excel) should reach the UGC Secretariat via email by the deadline (i.e. **5:00 p.m. of 30 October 2020 (Friday)**).
- (g) To help reduce the cost of processing and save paper, nominees and supporting universities are urged to keep the length of research plan and attachments to the minimum and use double-sided printing / photocopying when making copies. It is important that nominees and supporting universities should comply with

the page / word limits specified in various sections of the nomination form.

SECTION A PARTICULARS OF THE NOMINEE

- (a) To ensure record accuracy and to facilitate identification of the nominee, his / her name on the Hong Kong Identity Card / Passport (where applicable) should be used and entered in the standard RGC format:

	Surname (in capital letters)	Other Name*
e.g.	CHAN	Peter Tai-wai
e.g.	ZHONG	Yaping
e.g.	ROBINSON	Philip

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

- (b) In view of heightened personal privacy concern, the nominee is only required to provide the first 4 characters of HKID / Passport number (e.g. A123XXXX).
- (c) With a view to establishing the researcher database in Hong Kong, the nominee is required to provide his / her Open Researcher and Contributor ID Identifier (ORCID iD) in this section.
- (d) The RGC shall have the discretion to decide on the selection panel responsible for the final assessment of each nomination.

SECTION B ACADEMIC REFEREES **and SECTION C RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) The Academic Referee's Report Form (PDFS-3) should be forwarded to each of the nominee's two academic referees.
- (b) The two academic referees should be familiar with the nominee's academic achievements and research ability. Proposed supervisor(s) of the nominee during the fellowship period should clearly declare the conflict(s) of interest in the capacity of academic referee in the nomination. Persons from non-academic background are not considered as appropriate academic referees.

- (c) The referee's report should be entirely written by the academic referees, who should return their completed report directly to the supporting university for their inclusion in the submission of nomination.

SECTION D ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

- (a) Both the nominee and the supporting university are responsible for ensuring the authenticity of the attached documents and the accuracy of information in this section.

SECTION E PUBLICATIONS, PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS, PRIZES AND AWARDS, TRAINING

- (a) Both the nominee and the supporting university are responsible for ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of information in this section.
- (b) Please attach, if applicable, (dated) letter / email of acceptance for publications not yet published but have been formally accepted by journal / publisher / conference after the completion of review process of the publications.

SECTION F PROPOSED RESEARCH

- (a) The **project title**, if applicable, should be informative, but short and concise.
- (b) The nominee should confirm his / her **research field area(s) and code(s)**, lists of which are provided in Annex A. To facilitate the appointment of the right experts to evaluate the proposal, the nominee should select a specific primary field area as far as possible. If the nominee 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.
- (c) A short **abstract** of a maximum of one A4 page comprehensible to a non-specialist should be provided. This should be informative and indicative of the nature of the research to be conducted.
- (d) The **objectives** of research must be presented in point form. Reasons for undertaking the research shall be provided. Nominees 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. On proposals concerning Creative Arts, nominees should ensure that proposals submitted to the RGC should contain research elements which contribute to academic attainments.

- (e) For **potential impact**, nominees are required to state the possible outcome of the research, its relevance, significance and value, such as contribution to academic, educational, scientific or professional development or potential for practical application.
- (f) For **background of research, research plan and methodology**, please state whether work has been / is being carried out by the nominee 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 the nominee and others. For continuation of previous projects, the progress made and results achieved during the previous years should be clearly summarised. 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.
- (g) A complete description of the research plan, the selected approach to the problem solution and a Gantt chart (if applicable) 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.
- (h) Nominees are required to list the name of journal, conference or other dissemination means, e.g. book chapter, for dissemination of research output. Illustrations are confined to a maximum of one A4 non-text page for diagrams, photos, charts and tables etc., if any.
- (i) All references, with a maximum of two A4 pages, should be provided in full and include all authors. Generally accepted citation format (e.g. American Psychological Association (APA) format) should be used.

SECTION I UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

- (a) Prior to submitting a PDFS nomination to RGC, the supporting university is advised to conduct interview assessment with the potential nominee on his / her academic strength, research ability and potential, degree of fitness, leadership, etc., and provide the assessment results and related information in this section for the selection panel's information / reference.
- (b) The supporting university is required to conduct plagiarism checking of the nominee's research plan and related information as set out in Section F.

ENQUIRIES

- (a) Enquiries about the contents of this set of Explanatory Notes and other related matters about the PDFS should be directed to the Research Offices of the Universities which, if in doubt, should consult the UGC Secretariat (via email to PDFS@ugc.edu.hk) for clarification. Also, correspondence regarding PDFS matters including enquiries, appeals and complaints should be made through the Research Offices of the Universities.
- (b) The guidelines on handling the information and personal data contained in PDFS nominations are set out at Annex B.

UGC Secretariat
August 2020

**List of Research Field Areas and Codes
for Science, Medicine, Engineering and Technology**

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
Personalised Medicine	1252
Rehabilitative and Physical Medicine	1254
Stem Cell Therapy	1256
Others (please specify)	1299

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
Visualisation & 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

Mechanical, Production & Industrial Engineering

(Cont'd) (Subject Area: E4)

<u>Field Area</u>	<u>Code</u>
Production & Manufacturing	2408
Robotics & Automation	2409
Textile	2410
Thermal	2411
Biomechanics	2412
Fuel Engineering	2413
Others (please specify)	2499

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, Social Sciences and Business Studies**

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

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

Handling of Information and Personal Data
Contained in PDFS Nominations

Purpose of Collection of Information and Personal Data

1. Information and personal data contained in the PDFS nomination are collected for the following purposes:
 - (a) determination of the eligibility of nominee concerned for the award of PDFS fellowship;
 - (b) assessment of the merits of the research proposal / plan submitted;
 - (c) compilation of periodic reports and statistical returns for analysis and research by the RGC / UGC in relation to the use of public funds;
 - (d) sharing of data with other government departments / research funding agencies for the avoidance of duplicate funding; and
 - (e) for successful nominations, such data may be used for project monitoring, promotion, publicity and may also be published on the RGC website.

Handling of Information and Personal Data

2. The nomination including personal data 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 the nominee wants to exclude any individuals from access to the submitted information, please inform the RGC separately at the juncture of submission of nomination.

Physical Retention of Nominations

3. Nominations 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.

Right of Access to Personal Data

4. Notwithstanding the arrangement described above, nothing in this note will affect the legal right of nominee concerned to request access to personal data held by the RGC about his / her nomination 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.

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