

Action Plan

1. Communication and Engagement

- The University Grants Committee (UGC), in partnership with the Research Grants Council (RGC), will develop a communication and engagement policy for the RGC with a view to improving transparency by early 2018. The RGC will explore further promotion of its work through the Internet and/or social media platform. More information about the work of the RGC will be shared with the university staff and researchers on the RGC website.
- The UGC will encourage Heads of Universities/Heads of Institutions to enhance the dissemination of information from the RGC to front-line researchers and will invite their suggestions of new engagement activities for consideration by RGC in late 2017.
- In addition to existing channels and activities, the RGC will explore further measures to enhance communication and engagement with the academic community. For example, a symposium will be held in November 2017 to engage front-line researchers. The Chairman, RGC will have regular meetings with universities after each RGC meeting. Details of the RGC assessment processes will be uploaded on the RGC website for researchers' information. Starting from June 2018, committees/panels will be invited to provide a brief reflective report on the quality of applications and point out gaps for applicants' reference after each exercise.

2. Volume of Research Funding

- The UGC is exploring with the Government the possibility of injecting further resources into the Research Endowment Fund to ensure a steady flow of research funding for UGC-funded universities and to support new initiatives. The UGC is also seeking additional financial support to help the universities tap more funding sources and foster a philanthropic culture.

- Consideration will be given to seeking matching funds from UGC-funded universities/industry for approved projects under the new Research Impact Fund which will be launched in early 2018.
- With a view to enhancing a closer link with the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), the RGC has approved that the interface measures between collaborative funding schemes and the ITF will be extended to individual funding schemes (namely the General Research Fund (GRF), Early Career Scheme (ECS) and Faculty Development Scheme (FDS)) starting from the 2018/19 exercise.

3. Impact and Benefit

- The Research Impact Fund will be implemented on a pilot basis to encourage more impactful research and foster more collaborative efforts with stakeholders beyond academia. Stakeholders will be consulted on the eligibility, funding mechanism, application and assessment mechanism and control and review mechanism of the Fund in November 2017 and a detailed operational framework will then be worked out by the RGC in December 2017. The first call for proposals is expected to be issued in early 2018.
- RGC has approved to include research impact as one of the assessment criteria for various RGC research funding schemes. Starting from the 2018/19 exercise, applicants of GRF, ECS and FDS will be invited to provide optional technology transfer plans in the project proposals.
- The next Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 2020 will include research impact as one of the elements of assessment.

4. Portfolio Balance

- The Research Impact Fund will be launched in early 2018 in response to calls for review of the broader societal impact of research the RGC has funded.

- The RGC will review the Institutional Development Scheme for the self-financing sector. Result of the review is expected to be available in 2018.

5. Strategic Issues

- The UGC is preparing a strategic plan setting out the principles, strategies, strategic priorities and practices of the UGC. Subject to UGC's views, consideration may be given to including RGC's strategy into the UGC's strategic plan.
- The recommendation relating to alignment of strategies of different funding bodies in Hong Kong will be brought to the attention of other local funding bodies for their consideration and follow up.

6. Research Portion

- The UGC has decided to “freeze” the percentage of the competitive part of the Research Portion (R-portion) for 2017/18 at the 2016/17 level, i.e. 26 per cent, pending a further review of the competitive allocation mechanism of the R-portion. The R-portion review is expected to be completed in the second half of 2018.

7. Quality of Assessment and Phase II Review

- The RGC is developing a new electronic system which aims to manage all the funding schemes of the RGC online. The new system will provide better support for different browsers, enhance the operating speed of the system, allow electronic storage of data for easy search and retrieval, etc. The new system is expected to be fully rolled out in 2019.
- The RGC will conduct the Phase II Review to examine less macro issues such as the quality of assessment and monitoring processes, means of communication among members of the panels/committees, time line of funding schemes and arrangement guarding against conflict of interest in the assessment process and other issues

identified in the Phase I Review, with a view to streamlining the processes to maintain fairness and enhance efficiency. The RGC will begin the Phase II Review in late 2017 and the review result is expected to be available in early 2019.