

## **Health and Medical Research Fund - Research Fellowship Awards**

### **Guidelines for Accounting, Reporting, Project Monitoring and Change Requests**

These guidelines serve to remind the Fellowship Applicants (FAs) and the Administering Institutions (AIs) about the key issues relating to accounting, reporting and monitoring requirements of research fellowship awards funded by the Health and Medical Research Fund (HMRF).

FAs and AIs shall comply with these guidelines in conjunction with the signed Agreements. FAs are advised to contact the research offices of their respective AIs for accounting and research administrative support. For further queries, please contact the Research Fund Secretariat (the Secretariat) (Email: rfs@fhb.gov.hk).

The reports, change requests and claims for reimbursement shall be submitted to the Secretariat.

#### **1. Accounting arrangements**

Expenditures incurred in the claims for reimbursement shall only cover the fellowship period between the commencement date and end date (both dates inclusive) as set out in the Agreement. Additional funding or cost of work incurred before the commencement of the fellowship is **not** allowed. The training cost should not exceed \$200,000.

- (a) Claims for reimbursement shall only cover the period between the commencement and end date of the fellowship as set out in the Agreement.
- (b) Claims for reimbursement should be duly submitted to the Secretariat when expenditures are incurred. Claims shall be made no more frequently than bimonthly.
- (c) Prior approval from the Secretariat is required for budget virement between any two categories (e.g. “Staff” and “Other Expenses”), or addition of new budget items, or change of staff composition.

Key updates are highlighted in **yellow**.

- (d) Revised monthly salary for budgeted staff due to cost-of-living adjustment under AI's policy is automatically approved **provided** that the total of the staff budget remains unchanged.
- (e) Overspending of any individual item within any category is automatically approved **provided** that the accumulated overspending of any individual item does not exceed 10% of the item's budget **and** does not exceed the ceiling for that item as set out in the grant policy (e.g. a maximum of HK\$20,000 for publication costs) **and** the budget total of the category concerned is unchanged.
- (f) Payment will be made within **six weeks** to AI after satisfactory progress of the project, verification and acceptance by the Government of each reimbursement claim form submitted by the AI. The Secretariat will put the claim on hold under the following circumstances –
  - i. When the project account is frozen due to unsatisfactory progress and overdue deliverables such as report and financial statement.
  - ii. After the reminder has been issued to the FA/AI for submission of Training or Interim or Final Report and before the acceptance of the relevant report.
  - iii. The accumulated claim amount has been over 80% of the total approved budget or the ceiling for payment as specified in the Agreement.

## **2. Submission and assessment of reports**

- (a) Training, Progress, Interim, Final and Dissemination Reports, certified financial statements and Audited Accounts shall be submitted according to the specific due dates and formats.
- (b) A list of publications (including in press), patents and other Intellectual Property Rights that have resulted directly from the research project shall be provided. FA/AI should seek written consent from the Government before filing a patent application. Please provide information on the patent to be filed or obtained where applicable. If there is no patent related items, please state "None".
- (c) During the submission of Final Reports, please provide an equipment list, if any, containing (i) serial number or unique stock code; (ii) date of purchase; (iii) location; and (iv) actual value of each item of equipment purchased under the grant.

- (d) Reminders will be issued to FA and AI before the due date of submission and deliverables will be assessed by the respective parties set out below –

Deliverables	Reminder issued before due date of submission		Reviewing parties* for PR, TR, IR, FR and DR
	To FA	To AI	
Progress Report (PR)	Two weeks	–	Secretariat**
Training Report (TR)	One month	One month	Research Fellowship Assessment Panel (RFAP) members  Please refer to <b><u>Annex A</u></b> for details of the workflow.
Interim Report (IR) and certified financial statement (FS)	One month	One month	
Final Report (FR), Dissemination Report (DR), certified FS and Audited Account (AA)	One month	One month	

\* *The progress of each fellowship award is monitored by three RFAP members (Assessor 1, 2 and 3) with the most relevant expertise assigned by the Secretariat. If the report is rejected by Assessor 1, the FA will be required to revise the report for further review by Assessor 1. If the revised report remains unsatisfactory as determined by Assessor 1, it will be reviewed by Assessor 2. The report will be rejected if both Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 find it unsatisfactory. If Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 have different views, the revised report will be reviewed by Assessor 3. The final decision will be come up by majority vote of the three Assessors.*

\*\* *The Secretariat may seek views from Assessors assigned to monitor the progress of the award where appropriate.*

- (e) Warning email will be issued to FA and AI if overdue deliverable(s) is not submitted after issuance of two overdue reminders with extended deadline. The following actions will be carried out if FA fails to submit the deliverable(s) by the final deadline given in the warning email: termination of award, recovery of the

Key updates are highlighted in **yellow**.

grant, marking track record and debarment from applying and receiving HMRF grants.

- (f) The account of on-going project with unsatisfactory progress or overdue report(s) will be frozen (i.e. all claims and payment will be put on hold) until the outstanding issues have been resolved. FA and AI will be informed of the decision once the project account is frozen.
- (g) Subject to Assessor 1's advice, FA will be invited to revise FR **ONCE** if it is not accepted. If the revised FR is still not accepted after taking the majority vote of the three Assessors, close the project according to the contractual agreement (may hold final payment or require a full/partial recovery of grants) and marking track record of FA.

### **3. Dissemination of results**

- (a) FR eligible for dissemination of results will be uploaded to the Secretariat's website within **one month** after closure of the fellowship. The relevant DR may be published in Hong Kong Medical Journal Supplement where appropriate. FA can request the Secretariat to defer the dissemination if necessary.
- (b) The impact of projects conducted during the fellowship period with Final Reports rated "Accepted" are evaluated on a regular basis using a "payback framework" – an internationally recognised measure of health research activities, **two years** after the end date of the fellowship. It is a **contractual requirement** that FA shall provide information relating to projects under the HMRF for the purpose of evaluation after project completion.
- (c) FAs are required to share their experience and research findings after completion of the fellowship at the Health Research Symposium organised by the Food and Health Bureau.

### **4. Project monitoring**

- (a) FAs shall comply with the Clearance Requirements as stipulated in the Agreements. The study protocol/ scope approved by the AI's Institutional Review Board (IRB)/ Ethics Committee (EC) must be the same as that approved by the HMRF.

Key updates are highlighted in **yellow**.

- (b) FAs and/ or AIs shall notify the Secretariat effectively and as early as possible of any event which is likely to prejudice the project outcome, whether in a qualitative, quantitative or financial aspect, or the timely completion of the project.
- (c) If the FA/ AI fails to comply with any terms and conditions stipulated in the agreement, the fellowship will be subject to termination and recovery of grants.
- (d) Any improprieties such as misconduct, early termination, incomplete fellowship without valid justification and non-disclosure of research work done before commencement date will lead to penalty actions. Please refer to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants (Annex B)*, which can be downloaded from the Secretariat's website (<https://rfs.fhb.gov.hk>).

## 5. Change requests

- (a) **Prior approval from the Secretariat** is required for all change requests. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- (b) **To change a Co-Applicant (Co-A)**: The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to replace a Co-A by nominating a suitably qualified candidate and submitting the CV of the nominee. Prior approval is also required to remove a Co-A without replacement. The FA and/or AI shall submit a written request with rationale justifying removal and no replacement is necessary. **The FA should provide written consent from the Co-A concerned for removing the Co-A from the project team.**
- (c) **To change the Mentor**: The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to replace a mentor by nominating a suitably qualified faculty with justifications in a written request.
- (d) **To extend the project end date**: Each fellowship lasts for a maximum of two consecutive years (inclusive of both training and research components). The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to extend the end date by submitting a written request with full justifications and the revised work plan. Normally, request for project extension submitted after the completion date of the fellowship will not be considered. Request for extending the fellowship period over two consecutive years will be considered on a discretionary basis.

Key updates are highlighted in **yellow**.

- (e) To change the study protocol: Change of scope (objective) of training plan and research plan is not allowed. The FA and/or AI shall seek prior approval to change the study protocol (e.g., the number of subjects and inclusion/exclusion criteria) by providing full justifications with a discussion of the anticipated impact on the study objectives and timeline. FA shall obtain the relevant approvals from the IRB/EC and regulatory bodies after a change of study protocol is granted.
- (f) Decision on a change request will be normally issued to FA and/or AI within 10 working days upon receipt of the request. Longer processing time is needed if approval from RFAP member(s) is required. The approving authorities for change requests are set out below –

<b>Change requests</b>	<b>Approving authorities*</b>
Change of Co-A i. Without replacement ii. With replacement	RFAP member(s) Secretariat
Change of Mentor	RFAP member(s)
Protocol change	
Project extension i. Extended fellowship to be completed within 2 consecutive years ii. Extended fellowship to be completed over 2 consecutive years	Secretariat RFAP member(s)
Budget virement	Secretariat

\* *Each fellowship award is monitored by three RFAP members (Assessor 1, 2 and 3) with the most relevant expertise assigned by the Secretariat. If the request is rejected by Assessor 1, the FA may be required to respond to Assessor 1's comments for further review by Assessor 1. If the request is still rejected by Assessor 1, it will be reviewed by Assessor 2. The request will be rejected if both Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 reject the request. If Assessor 1 and Assessor 2 have different views, the request will be reviewed by Assessor 3. The final decision will be come up by majority vote of the three Assessors.*

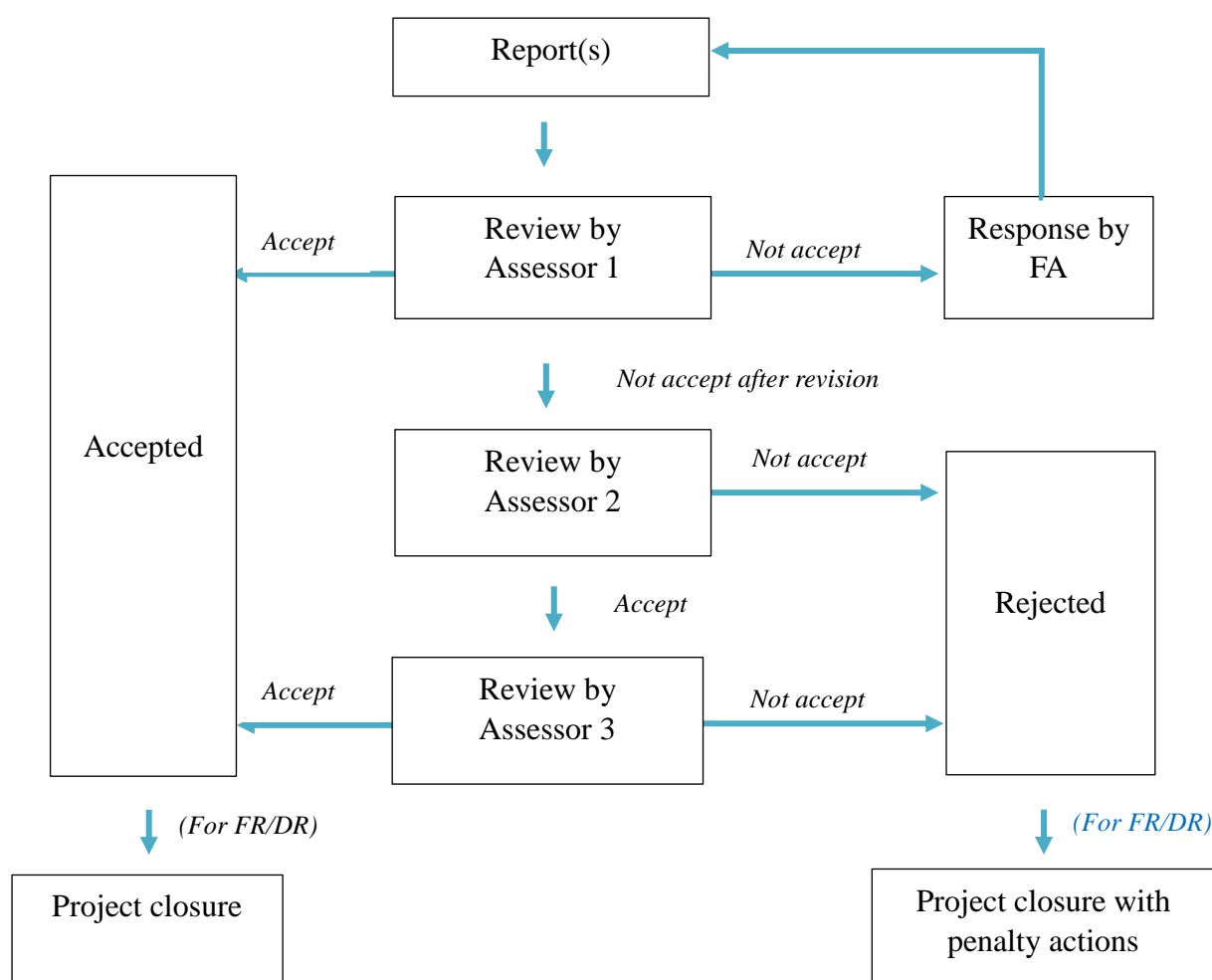
## **6. Improprieties of Applicants**

Improprieties may arise at any point in the funding cycle (e.g. grant application submission, peer review, ongoing project or post-completion evaluation) including -  
Key updates are highlighted in **yellow**.

- Scientific misconduct;
  - Non-disclosure of important information (e.g. conflict of interest (COI), double dipping and research work done before project commencement); and
  - Non-compliance to funding regulations without valid justifications (e.g. failure to submit final report and outcome evaluation, early termination, incomplete, etc.).
- (a) AIs should have in place adequate systems to ensure the quality of research conducted by FAs and their compliance to the terms and conditions under the HMRF, in particular effective mechanisms for identifying and handling allegations of scientific misconduct.
- (b) In the event of improprieties, FA and/ or Co-A concerned will be requested to provide clarification. Where violation of research ethics is suspected (including plagiarism, fraudulence, non-disclosure of important information), the respective AI will be requested to conduct investigation and report the findings to the Secretariat within three months. The RFAP member will examine the case and advise the next course of actions according to the *Management of Track Records of Applicants* (**Annex B**). Research Council's decision on penalty actions is final.
- (c) Normally, FA and/ or Co-A and AI concerned will be informed of the decision and consequence of improprieties within 6 months. Longer processing time is needed where complex issues or multiple parties are involved.

Research Fund Secretariat  
Research Office  
Food and Health Bureau  
April 2019

**Review of Reports of Research Fellowship Awards**



**Remarks -**

1. Only one revision of IR/ FR is allowed.
2. TR will be sent either with IR or FR/DR to Assessor(s) for assessment
3. If the revised FR/ DR are not accepted after taking the majority vote of the three Assessors, close the project according to the contractual agreement (may hold final payment or require a full/partial recovery of grants from AI) and mark FA's track record.

DR: Dissemination Report

FR: Final Report

IR: Interim Report

TR: Training Report



**Management of Track Records of Applicants<sup>1</sup>  
(Effective from 1 November 2018)**

<b>Improprieties</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Gravity</b>	<b>Actions<sup>2,3</sup></b>
Scientific Misconduct <sup>4</sup>	Plagiarism, fraudulence, etc.	Serious	i. Disqualification in the related funding exercise; and ii. Debar <sup>5</sup> for 5 years
Double dipping not declared	Receiving grant from HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or overseas)	Heavy	i. Disqualification in the related funding exercise; and ii. Debar for 1 year
	Submission of grant applications or similar proposals to HMRF or any of its preceding funding schemes, or other funding agencies (local or overseas)	Light	Warning letter
Conflict of Interest not declared	The nominated reviewer(s) as a direct relative or a close personal contact with Principal Applicant (PA) or Co-applicant (Co-A)	Medium	Disqualification in the related funding exercise
	The PA has the following relationship(s) with the nominated reviewer in the past 3 years at the time of grant application – - research collaborator - mentor/student - work colleagues in the same department - employer/ employee/ business partner	Medium	Disqualification in the related funding exercise

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise determined, the principal applicant shall be held primarily responsible for the conduct of the project and any penalties imposed as a consequence of any misconduct or non-compliance.

<sup>2</sup> The track record of the principal applicant who has committed any of the improprieties mentioned in this Annex shall be marked for and taken into account when considering of future grant applications for up to 5 years.

<sup>3</sup> If the misconduct is reported after commencement of the study, assessment will be made to determine whether any of the approved amount should be returned to the Government.

<sup>4</sup> Scientific misconduct means fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgements of data.

<sup>5</sup> Debarment covers applying and receiving grants from the Health and Medical Research Fund in the capacity of principal applicant.

Key updates are highlighted in yellow.

**Annex B**

<b>Improprieties</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Gravity</b>	<b>Actions<sup>2,3</sup></b>
Conflict of Interest not declared	The Co-A has the following relationship(s) with the nominated reviewer in the past 3 years at the time of grant application – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- research collaborator</li> <li>- mentor/student</li> <li>- work colleagues in the same department</li> <li>- employer/ employee/ business partner</li> </ul>	Light	Warning letter
Non-compliance	No submission of final report by deadline without valid justification	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Withhold funding of the project or recovery of the grant</li> <li>ii. Debar for 2 years and until the final report is submitted, whichever is later</li> </ul>
	Any of the following without valid justification – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early termination</li> <li>- Incomplete project</li> <li>- Research work done before project commencement not declared</li> </ul>	Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Partial payment or recovery of grant</li> <li>ii. Debar for 2 years</li> </ul>
	Final report graded “Unredeemable” or “Unacceptable”	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Withhold 10% or 20% of the grant subject to the terms and conditions in the agreement</li> </ul>