

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

HKU Strategic Partnerships Fund
with University of Toronto (UToronto), University of Chicago (UChicago),
University College London (UCL), King's College London (KCL),
University of Sydney (USyd) and Tsinghua University (Tsinghua) 2018-2019

I am pleased to announce the third annual cycle of the HKU Strategic Partnerships Fund with five top universities around the world, namely University of Toronto (UToronto), University of Chicago (UChicago), University College London (UCL), King's College London (KCL) and University of Sydney (USyd), as well as the first cycle of the joint funding with Tsinghua University (Tsinghua). Applications are now invited from eligible members of the University.

Background

Our aspiration to become the “Asia’s Global University” is an explicit goal set out in the document “[Asia's Global University, HKU: the next decade, our vision for 2016-2025](#)” under the vision of [3+1] I’s, viz. Innovation, Interdisciplinarity & Internationalisation converging to create Impact. The global higher education sector is increasingly competitive and rapidly changing. Our Mainland and international efforts have resulted in positive outcomes in student and staff recruitment and demographics, research collaborations, teaching, and knowledge exchange. We must sustain our current activities. Opportunities exist to strategically reposition HKU by taking full advantage of our unique attributes, assets, networks, and talent pools. HKU is well situated in a dynamic region of Asia and embodies a tradition that exemplifies the core value and best practices of the international academic community. Strategic partnership has emerged as an effective means to better position top world universities within the global knowledge node to deliver greater societal impact and secure greater visibility and recognition. For HKU, the identification and cultivation of global strategic university partners is critical to help us achieve this ambition.

To build on a robust foundation of existing activities, “Strategic Partnerships” demonstrates mutual institutional commitment to strengthen relationship throughout the entire university structure: from students and individual academic staff to department and cross-faculty in all aspects of our institutional mission.

HKU shares with these committed strategic partners:

At the institutional level

- Aligned institutional core values and missions
- Established trust
- Enthusiastically willing to partner and collaborate across all university levels
- Committed to internationalisation and campus diversity and integration
- Administratively and operationally transparent and easy to connect
- Significant global visibility, impact, reputation, and high ranking
- Established global or regional knowledge node with strong ties with other top institutions, regional and international organisations, industry, and public agencies



- Financially committed to cultivating institutional relationship
- Geopolitically well situated
- Existing platforms for trans-disciplinary and international collaborations targeting global challenges
- Strategically positioned to engage and to benefit from global and regional agenda: UN Sustainable Development Goals, PRC Belt & Road, EU Horizon 2020

At the faculty and individual staff level

- Complementary research strengths capable of gap-filling
- Robust on-going collaborations at PI-to-PI and faculty levels
- Clusters of existing investigators who are actively looking for inter-institutional and cross-disciplinary platforms to connect in order to synergise and to be uniquely positioned.

At the student level

- Robust existing student mobility activities with HKU with a strong desire to expand in terms of outbound/inbound numbers, diversifying programmes in undergraduate and post-graduate levels including joint degrees, research exchanges, summer programmes, internship, etc
- Active student-led international engagements

University of Toronto (UToronto), University of Chicago (UChicago), University College London (UCL), King's College London (KCL), University of Sydney (USyd) and Tsinghua University (Tsinghua) are top world universities that have been identified by multiple HKU Faculties as global strategic partners. Each has a wide range of expertise that can either synergise or complement existing HKU strengths to garner greater societal impact. Hyperlinks to the past press releases on the strategic partnerships are listed below:

- **UToronto** https://www.hku.hk/press/news_detail_17868.html
- **UChicago** http://www.hku.hk/press/news_detail_15016.html
- **UCL** http://www.hku.hk/press/news_detail_15480.html
- **KCL** <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/worldwide/newsevents/newsrecords/Co-Funding-with-University-of-Hong-Kong.aspx>
- **USyd** http://www.hku.hk/press/news_detail_15104.html
- **Tsinghua** https://www.hku.hk/press/news_detail_18574.html

Deadlines

| <u>Institution(s)</u> | <u>First call</u> | <u>Second call</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| USyd | 28 September 2018 | N/A |
| UChicago | 2 October 2018 | N/A |
| UCL | 26 October 2018 | N/A |
| KCL | 2 October 2018 | 31 January 2019 |
| UToronto | 2 October 2018 | 31 January 2019 |

(For USyd, UChicago and UCL, we will only have one call-for-proposal in 2018-19).

Tsinghua – Since the partnership was launched in end of 2018, there will only be one call during 2018-19 (Deadline: 10 January 2019).



Objectives

Six separate joint funds have been set up with UToronto, UChicago, UCL, KCL, USyd and Tsinghua in a 1:1 cost-sharing model with HKU. Each joint fund provides the necessary seed support for cross-cutting activities that are not normally funded through existing internal and external schemes. Activities with other universities continue to be valuable, highly encouraged, and supported with other mechanisms including the “HKU Global Partnership Seed Fund” (<http://www.global.hku.hk/funding-opportunities>).

Eligibility

Both teaching staff and students at the University are welcome to submit proposals.

1. Teaching staff: full-time Teachers or other full-time staff who meet the eligibility criteria for the relevant external funding. The category including Research Assistant Professors (RAPs), subject to their contract duration being such that they can oversee the externally funded projects as PI for at least the first year of the project’s planned duration. Professors of Practice (PP) are also welcome to apply.
2. Students: Full-time M.Phil and Ph.D students who have completed their first 1 year of studies in HKU; undergraduate and post-graduate students representing University-recognised student organisation. All student proposals must include proof of sponsorship and endorsement from a professorial staff member.

Funding ceiling and conditions

1. The maximum award funded jointly by HKU and partner institution is HK\$200,000 per proposal on a cost-sharing model (50:50). Departments/units/Faculties have the full discretion and flexibility to top-up the financial support for projects that are well- aligned with Departments/units/Faculties strategic priorities.
2. Additional matching support from external partners is highly desirable as an additional mean to maximise knowledge generation, dissemination, and implementation.
3. Proposals that are cross-disciplinary and facilitate gap-filling of existing HKU expertise while capitalising on current HKU strengths are expected. Projects that foster global initiatives and consortium partnerships are highly encouraged.
4. The scope of the proposal may include:
 - (a) Formation of expert consortium as a platform where distinct strengths of each partner can be synergised so the whole group is uniquely differentiated and well-positioned to address pressing global issues as identified by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) including urbanisation, healthy aging, food and water safety, ecology, health and wellbeing, and transcultural studies.
 - (b) Specifically for the joint proposals with UCL, focuses will be placed on multi-disciplinary approaches to the following global issues: global health, sustainable cities, cultural understanding, human wellbeing, transformative technology and justice and equity. Collaborations with expertise on and off campus are highly encouraged.
 - (c) Organising conferences and workshops to promote sharing of ideas among scholars, policy makers, and business leaders from HK, Mainland, and around the world; particularly welcome are planning and brainstorming workshops to facilitate the development of proposals for collaborative international projects that tackle grand challenges such as those stated in global and regional development agendas including



UN SDG, EU Horizon 2020, Belt/Road, Greater Bay Area Initiative.

- (d) Activities in collaboration with outside institutions to promote HKU global visibility, multi-lateral and cross-institutional partnership.
- (e) Projects that foster the development of undergraduate or postgraduate coursework units jointly taught by HKU and partnership institution staff members and the development of postgraduate research seminars jointly taught by HKU and partner institute staff.
- (f) Innovative ideas, whether nascent or fully elaborated, for how HKU might foster global initiatives and facilitate collaborations with Mainland and/or international partners.
- (g) **For HKU-Tsinghua joint funding only**, PI-to-PI research projects, staff and student exchange and mobility activities, and attending conferences that can be funded under existing internal and external schemes, which are otherwise considered **not** consistent with the intended goal of this programme, can be taken into account during internal review processes

Application and Review Processes

1. The proposal should be no more than 3 pages and cover the following:
 - (a) Names, affiliations, and full contact information of joint co-PIs (one from HKU and one from one of the partner institutions (i.e., either with UToronto, UChicago, UCL, KCL, USyd and Tsinghua). A signed letter of commitment from the co-PI of the partner institution is required.
 - (b) Description of the proposed activity: aims, significance, rationale, and alignment with the document "[Asia's Global University, HKU: the next decade, our vision for 2016-2025](#)" and the HKU Global Engagement Strategy (<http://www.global.hku.hk>);
 - (c) Clearly-defined outcome measures with follow-on activities and funding;
 - (d) Period and timeline of the proposed activities;
 - (e) Detailed budget of up to HK\$200,000 total (i.e., maximum HK\$100,000 from the HKU portion and HK\$100,000 from the partner institute portion of the fund). Additional financial commitment from one or more Faculty(ies) is highly encouraged in promoting cross-faculty collaboration within HKU. Additional matching support from external partners is highly desirable as an additional mean to maximise knowledge generation, dissemination, and implementation.
 - (f) Explanation of why the proposed activity is not normally funded through existing internal and external funding schemes.
2. It is strongly recommended that the Dean(s) of the Faculty of the applicant(s) should comment on the proposal submitted, specify the significance and the anticipated impact to the unit that would be brought forth by the proposed activity. A letter of commitment from external partners is highly encouraged.
3. Each proposal will be reviewed by at least 3 reviewers from a peer group comprised of HKU academic staff and administrative officers.
4. The reviewers are asked to comment on the strength(s) and weakness(es) for each following criteria and assign a priority score from 0-5:
 - (a) Overall impact;
 - (b) Alignment with the intended goals of the Partnership Fund;
 - (c) Investigators;
 - (d) Creativity and innovation;



- (e) Approach and likelihood of success;
 (f) Budget (Faculty and partners commitment) and sustainability

The point scale:

| Impact | Score | Descriptor | Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses |
|--------|-------|--------------|---|
| High | 5 | Exceptional | Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses |
| | 4 | Excellent | Very strong with only some minor weaknesses |
| Medium | 3 | Very Good | Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses |
| | 2 | Satisfactory | Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses |
| Low | 1 | Fair | Some strengths but with at least one major weakness |
| | 0 | Poor | Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses |

Minor weakness: easily addressable, does not substantially lessen impact
 Moderate weakness: lessens impact
 Major weakness: severely limits impact

5. For the Regulations Governing University Research Grants, please refer to http://intraweb.hku.hk/local/rss/urc/203-806_regulations.pdf.
6. Proposals should be sent to the office of Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) via email VPglobal@hku.hk or Ms. Jacqueline Leung (jacquelineleung@hku.hk).
7. For each application, reviewers' comments will be shared with the partner institution. Final award decision will be jointly decided by HKU and respective partner institution based merit and other funding considerations.
8. I should be grateful if Heads / Deans would bring this circular to the attention of Faculty members, research postgraduate and their supervisors as well as undergraduate students and student organisations.

Professor W. John KAO, PhD, FBSE
 Vice-President & Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global)

