This supersedes the previous circular of October 12, 2012

122/712 re-amended

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

To: List A

Eligibility for Applications for External Research Grants

1. As you are aware, there is a set of eligibility requirements for research grants of the Research Grants Council (RGC), including the requirement that a staff member on a fixed-term contract must be eligible at the time of funding award being made and for at least the first year of the project’s planned duration. For some RGC grants, an applicant must meet the requirements at the time of funding award being made and throughout the whole project period.

2. The University Research Committee (URC) has formulated a policy on eligibility requirements for applying for external research grants, including RGC and other external funding schemes. The over-arching principle behind the URC decision is for HKU to be a responsible institution and ensure project completion, if funded. It is therefore necessary for PIs and their Departments and Faculties to have a reasonable plan in place at the time of application to ensure project completion in a UGC-funded institution. For this reason, the University will not support applications from contract staff and retiring staff unless:

(a) for funding schemes which require PIs to be eligible throughout the whole project period (e.g. Collaborative Research Fund)
   (i) the PI’s current appointment can cover the whole project period; or
   (ii) the Faculty Dean or Head of Department supports the extension of the PI’s appointment to cover the whole project period, if the grant application is successful, subject to satisfactory academic performance upon review for contract renewal/extension;

(b) for other funding schemes which require PIs to be eligible for at least the first year of the project’s planned duration (e.g. General Research Fund), or do not have any requirement on PI’s contract duration (e.g. Innovation and Technology Fund, health grants)
   (i) the PI’s current appointment can cover the whole project period; or
   (ii) the PI’s current appointment can cover the first year of the project, and the Faculty Dean or the Head of Department supports that the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover the whole project period if the grant application is successful, subject to satisfactory academic performance upon review for contract renewal/extension; or
   (iii) the PI’s current appointment can cover the first year of the project, and the application has included an eligible Co-I whose employment by a UGC-funded institution covers the project duration, and who can take up the project after PI’s departure; or
(iv) the PI’s current appointment cannot cover the first year of the project, but the Faculty Dean or the Head of Department supports that the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover the first year of the project, and the application has included an eligible Co-I whose employment by a UGC-funded institution covers the project duration, and who can take up the project after PI’s departure.

(Note: (iii) and (iv) are not applicable to the Early Career Scheme which does not allow inclusion of Co-Is).

3. In order to ascertain that staff members meet the eligibility requirements before their applications can be submitted to the funding bodies, colleagues are now required to complete a research grant information form, indicating the Faculty Dean/Head of Department’s support (if applicable).

4. If you have any comments or enquiries, please let me know.

Professor P.K.H. Tam
Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President

April 12, 2013
To: List A

Eligibility for Applications for External Research Grants

I refer to my circular of July 23, 2012 concerning, among other things, the decision of the University Research Committee (URC) that for external research grants such as GRF, contract staff and retiring staff who do not meet the eligibility requirements will not be allowed to apply unless

(a) the Head of Department will undertake that the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover the first year of the project; and
(b) the application must include an eligible Co-I from HKU who can take up the project after the PI’s departure.

Comments have been received on the above decision due to the difficulty for many non-tenured academics to include an eligible HKU Co-I in their GRF proposals.

2. I would like to explain that the over-arching principle behind the URC decision is for HKU to be a responsible institution and ensure project completion, if funded. It is therefore necessary for PIs and their Departments and Faculties to have a reasonable plan in place at the time of application to ensure project completion in a UGC-funded institution. Bearing in mind this principle and taking into account the difficulties faced by some PIs as mentioned above, URC has agreed to my suggestion that the decision as stated in paragraph 1(b) above be slightly amended to allow replacing an eligible HKU Co-I with an eligible Co-I whose employment by a UGC-funded institution covers the project duration.

3. PIs should also note the following in the GRF explanatory notes (GRF2) on the eligibility requirements:

“Notwithstanding the foregoing cases … exceptional circumstances may be considered by the RGC on a case-by-case basis. The institution should seek the RGC’s special approval for such cases before submitting the application.”

PIs who do not fulfill the GRF eligibility requirements and/or the URC revised conditions will have to make a case for special approval, and such requests should be submitted through their Faculty Deans.

4. A revised circular which supersedes the previous one of July 23, 2012 is enclosed. If you have further comments, please let me know.

Professor P.K.H. Tam
Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President

October 12, 2012

Encl.
To: List A

Eligibility for Applications for External Research Grants and Contract Research

I write to inform you that the University Research Committee (URC) has formulated a policy on eligibility requirements for applying for external research grants.

2. As you are aware, there is a set of eligibility requirements for research grants of the Research Grants Council (RGC), including the requirement that a staff member on a fixed-term contract must be eligible at the time of funding award being made and for at least the first year of the project’s planned duration. For some RGC grants, an applicant must meet the requirements at the time of funding award being made and throughout the whole project period.

3. URC felt that the University should enforce implementation of the RGC policy at the application stage, and extend it to all external funding schemes. The University will not support applications from contract staff and retiring staff who do not meet the eligibility requirements unless:

(a) for funding schemes which require PIs to be eligible throughout the whole project period (e.g. Collaborative Research Fund and Strategic Public Policy Research Scheme), the Head of Department undertakes that the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover the whole project period, if the grant application is successful; and

(b) for other funding schemes which require PIs to be eligible for at least the first year of the project’s planned duration (e.g. General Research Fund (GRF)), or do not have any requirement on PI’s contract duration (e.g. Innovation and Technology Fund, health grants), (i) the Head of Department undertakes that the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover the first year of the project; and (ii) the application must include an eligible Co-I whose employment by a UGC-funded institution covers the project duration, and who can take up the project after PI’s departure (except for the Early Career Scheme which does not allow inclusion of Co-Is).

4. For contract research, it is also decided that contract staff and retiring staff cannot undertake contract research unless the Head of Department undertakes that (i) the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover the whole project period, or (ii) that the PI’s appointment will be extended to cover first year of the project and the project includes an eligible Co-I from HKU who can take over the project after retirement/departure of the PI.

5. In order to ascertain that staff members meet the eligibility requirements before their applications can be submitted to the funding bodies, colleagues are now required to complete a revised research grant information form/contract research form, indicating the Head of Department’s undertaking (if applicable). For applications which are submitted on-line (such as GRF), the University will assume that the Head of Department has agreed to undertake once the Head has endorsed the application on-line.

6. If you have any comments or enquiries, please let me know.

Professor P.K.H. Tam
Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President

October 12, 2012