

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Questions Regarding the Government Research Matching Grant Scheme (RMGS) and Responses from the UGC (in Blue)

General Questions:

1. We would like to clarify whether the following areas of research-related expenditure are eligible for matching under RMGS:

Staffing cost

- a) Salaries, wages, employee benefits for associates carrying non-research positions who directly work for a research project;
Cost of research personnel working directly for the research project will be eligible for matching.
- b) Salaries, wages, employee benefits for associates carrying non-research positions who directly provide assistance to a research unit or project(s) in a research unit;
Cost of personnel providing general assistance and not dedicated only for the research project concerned will not be eligible for matching.
- c) Salaries, wages, employee benefits for associates carrying non-research positions who directly oversee the operation of a research unit;
Cost of personnel providing general assistance and not dedicated only for the research project concerned will not be eligible for matching.
- d) Salaries, wages, employee benefits for associates carrying non-research positions who maintain and develop online platform and applications for electronic devices for a research project;
Cost of personnel providing general assistance and not dedicated only for the research project concerned will not be eligible for matching.
- e) Training and coaching cost for associates carrying non-research positions who assist in the implementation of a research project;
Only cost of research personnel working directly for the research project will be eligible for matching.
- f) Training and coaching cost for external associates who assist in the implementation of a research project;
Only cost of research personnel working directly for the research project will be eligible for matching.
- g) Staffing cost for organization of research-related lecture/workshop/international summit/symposium by a non-research unit;

Cost of personnel providing general assistance and not dedicated only for the research project concerned will not be eligible for matching.

Components of a research project

- h) Recruitment of research subjects, e.g. incentives, advertising and publicity;
- i) Online platform and development of applications for electronic devices;
- j) Publicity and promotion for dissemination of research outcome;
- k) Public education programme making use of the research outcome for social impact;
- l) Assessment and evaluation for a research project;

Please make reference to research project cost / expenses items under prevailing RGC research funding schemes.

Activities undertaken by a research unit

- m) Organization of lecture/workshop/summit/symposium by a research unit;
 - n) Publication produced by a research unit;
 - o) Public relations and outreach activities undertaken by a research unit;
 - p) Miscellaneous cost, e.g. office setup, rental for operating a research unit;
- Any indirect costs (i.e. "on-costs") arising from R&D projects / activities will not be eligible for matching. If the cost / expenses item is under a specific research project, it will be eligible for matching under the category "Research project (covering equipment, staff costs, etc.)".

Cost incurred from academic conference/workshop

- q) Registration/administration fees for attending academic conference;
- r) Traveling cost for attending academic conference;
- s) Accommodation cost for attending academic conference;
- t) Invitation for overseas academic and research scholars for exchange;
- u) Publicity and operational cost for organization of research-related lecture/workshop/international summit/symposium by a non-research unit;
- v) Publication of materials for organization of research-related lecture/workshop/international summit/symposium by a non-research unit.

Sponsorships for attending academic conferences in relation to specific research project(s) / work (e.g. conference participation) are eligible for matching. Seminars / workshops for general research purpose are not covered under the RMGS. Any indirect costs (i.e. "on-costs") arising from R&D projects / activities will not be eligible for matching.

2. As stipulated on P.3 of the Operating Guide for RMGS, the UGC Secretariat reserves the final right to define research-related purpose. If we have enquiry on whether a particular funding is eligible for RMGS, can the UGC Secretariat be able to give us the confirmed answer before we submit the application for RMGS please? Any service pledge (say how many working days) that the UGC Secretariat will give us a firm answer? We prefer a clarification can be made before submission to RMGS, as under clause 14 on P.5 of the Operating Guide, the application of the matching ratio, the "floor" and the "ceiling" in

respect of remaining eligible donations/research grants/research contracts will not be adjusted to the benefit of a university/institution.

The UGC Secretariat will try its best to confirm with the university as soon as practicable.

3. Under FAQ15, it allows consultancy fees, licensing revenues and royalties to be eligible for matching. Does Research MGS limit the eligibility only to “new” income received after 1/8/2019? Are those income listed above received in the past also eligible for matching if they are dedicated for research-related expenditure on or after 1/8/2019?

Under the principle for matching, only the research-related expenditure will be eligible for matching under the RMGS. The matching grant so provided should also be designated for research. Only donations / research grants / research contracts during the three-year operation period will be eligible for matching.

4. Are income or reserves generated from our self-financed programmes for research-related expenditure also eligible for matching? Does Research MGS limit the eligibility only to “new” income received after 1/8/2019? Are reserves generated before 1/8/2019, but will be used for research-related expenditures on or after 1/8/2019 eligible for matching?

No, the objective of RMGS is to incentivise the private sector to strengthen financial support in terms of donations / research grants / research contracts for R&D.

5. For cases where the patent application costs are shared between the University and the academic staff, is the sum contributed by the staff’s own personal income eligible for matching?

The financial support from the private sector for patent application costs is eligible for matching, but contribution from a university employee is not eligible for matching as such expense can be met with the matched grant.

6. Referring to FAQ23 “As long as the support/donation is not from public/government, it is eligible for matching...” Since the University has a lot of collaborations with Hospital Authority where other sources of funding are involved, is the research funding received from such government-related organization eligible for matching if HA confirms that the funding came from private sources?

No, the objective of RMGS is to incentivise the private sector to strengthen financial support in terms of donations / research grants / research contracts for R&D.

7. Under FAQ24 & 25, research funding supporting overhead, indirect costs, on-costs, management costs, administrative/executive/ management staff not performing research task/duties is not eligible for matching. If the University uses its own private sources to cover the overhead/indirect/administrative costs of the research project (i.e. expenditures not related to research activities) or if the overhead charges are waived, is the whole research funding to be used for research-related expenditure eligible for matching?

The financial support from private sector for direct costs of research-related expenditure is eligible for matching.

8. Following FAQ9 that said University/Institution should provide detailed information on the research activity(ies) in the application. Will invitation letter from collaborator; conference pamphlet/website; conference registration form; or extract of meeting notes be sufficient to prove the nature of research activities?

The UGC Secretariat will vet the application / submission and invite the university / institution to supplement if necessary.

9. Extended from the questions above, will meals, overseas travelling expenses and/or per diem allowance be claimed as research-related expenditure apart from the air ticket fees and accommodation costs, which the University is currently supporting in overseas research trips?

Any indirect costs (i.e. "on-costs") arising from R&D projects / activities will not be eligible for matching.

Research Contract Related:

10. Regarding the eligibility of research contract, whether the following examples of research contracts are eligible for Research MGS:

a) Service for providing a course to professionals on certain technology, for example, a course for surgeons on certain surgery technology or use of certain equipment;
This is rather a teaching / training service contract without research element.

b) Testing or analyzing service provided to industry sponsor using conventional testing technology without involvement of developing any new technology.
This is rather a service provision contract without research element.

Donation Related:

11. If a donation instalment in support of a research project/research-related expenditure has been applied for the Eighth MGS and/or RMGS, will the next donation instalment for supporting the same research project/research-related expenditure be eligible to apply for RMGS?

Yes, each donation (instalment) can be treated as a separate application, provided that the same research project / research-related expenditure does not obtain "double matching" / "double funding" from government / public money.

12. If a research project originally supported by government/public source but the funding from the government/public source has ceased already before the commencement of RMGS, will further private donations in support of the same research project be eligible to apply for RMGS?

Yes, provided that the same research project does not obtain "double matching" / "double funding" from government / public money.

13. Per Q.18 of FAQs prepared by the UGC, a specific amount drawn from an endowment and deposited in a separate account dedicated for a particular research project is eligible

for RMGS. Is the said endowment required to be set up within the 3-year operation period of RMGS? If not, an endowment already established before the commencement of RMGS, will a specific amount drawn from this endowment and deposited in a separate account dedicated for a particular research project within the 3-year operation period of RMGS be eligible for matching?

The endowment should be donated within the 3-year operation period of RMGS.

14. Also regarding the FAQ18, is investment and interest income generated from an existing endowment fund eligible for matching if the said income is used to support research-related expenditure on or after 1/8/2019? For example, donation for setting up an endowment fund was received in 2016 and the University allocates the investment and interest income annually for research related project. Is the amount allocated to research project after 1/8/2019 from this 2016 endowment fund eligible for matching? If yes, what kind of supporting documents are required as there will not be any bank statement record? Are internal allocation memo and relevant budget plan sufficient for application?

No, the endowment (and the investment / interest income) should be donated (and generated) within the 3-year operation period of RMGS and to support research-related expenditure.

15. Extended from the questions above, is investment and interest income generated from University's own private reserves also eligible for matching?

No, the objective of RMGS is to incentivize the private sector to strengthen financial support in terms of donations / research grants / research contracts for R&D.

16. If any part of the University's own private reserves is dedicated for a particular research project, is it also eligible for matching?

No, the objective of RMGS is to incentivize the private sector to strengthen financial support in terms of donations / research grants / research contracts for R&D.

17. Apart from the categories of research-related purpose stipulated on P.3 and Enclosure B (ii) of the Operating Guide for RMGS, is it mandatory to supplement a brief description and detailed budget of research donations having very general purpose that would be applied for RMGS (w.r.t. Q.3 of FAQs prepared by the UGC)?

Yes, the key element is that the donation should be dedicated for research and development in a specific manner. Universities / Institutions should provide brief description of the usage of expenditure or, as far as practicable, information on the research project / initiative / activity to be supported.

18. The University has set up a US limited company for raising donations in US. For a new donation supporting research project received in US, how will the bank receipt date be determined for eligibility of matching? Is it the first receipt date in US (bank-in date to the bank account in US) or the subsequent date when the remittance is made to the University's bank account in Hong Kong? For example, donation received by US bank account in 31/7/2019, and the remittance is made to the University's bank account in Hong Kong on 15/8 2019, is it eligible for matching under RMGS?

The bank-in date should be the date the university's bank account receives the donation / transfer.

19. As the cost for setting up research facilities may include recurrent expenditure such as rental, operation and maintenance expenses, could the whole sum donated to set up a new "research institute" or to upgrade the existing research institute under a university be considered as eligible for the matching? The establishment of a research institute would normally include various capital work (e.g. renovation and set up costs) and the operation costs of the research institute, such as the open recruitment of the director and operating staff of the institute, utilities and other running costs etc.

For UGC-funded universities, donations for capital works in Hong Kong are not eligible for matching, and the matching grant also cannot be used for capital works as there are established capital works programmes for them to apply for.

20. Will donated property be eligible for matching?

Donated property is not readily realisable, and is therefore not eligible for matching. Nevertheless, its realised value will be eligible for matching.

21. Or, will rental income received from (1) a newly donated property or (2) an existing donated property for research-related expenditure be eligible for matching?

Rental income received from a newly donated property, with appropriate certification proof and dedicated for research and development in a specific manner, will be eligible for matching.

22. Will in-kind donations contributed to the University not in the form of service or equipment such as art pieces, fixture, publications, software licenses, medicines etc. dedicated for research purposes are eligible for matching, on condition that documentary proof of the value of sponsorship as well as official receipt could be provided by the University?

Donated art pieces, fixture, etc. which are not readily realisable are not eligible for matching. Nevertheless, their realised value will be eligible for matching.

For publications, software licenses and medicines etc. which are dedicated for the research project concerned will be eligible for matching if supported with documentary proof substantiating the value of sponsorship and official receipt.

30 July 2019