



## The Chinese University of Hong Kong

### Guidelines for Strategic Partnership Award for Research Collaboration (SPARC) for 2025–26

Deadline: 31 March 2025, Monday

#### 1. Preamble

As part of the Chinese University of Hong Kong's global engagement effort, the Strategic Partnership Award for Research Collaboration (SPARC) was established in 2021 to build joint research programmes with some of the University's priority partners. The aim of SPARC is to seed new collaborative research programmes in the University's strategic research areas which will be impactful and can be sustained through external funding sources for the next phase of their development.

#### 2. Partners & Strategic Areas for Collaboration

a) The current round of the Award supports collaborative research projects with **priority partner institutions** primarily in the four strategic research areas<sup>1</sup> identified in CUHK 2025, which are *China: Tradition and Modernity*; *Innovative Biomedicine*; *Information and Automation Technology*; and *Environment and Sustainability*. Projects which do not fall within the four areas may also be considered. The priority partners for the current round of application include:

- Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany
- Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
- National University of Singapore, Singapore
- The University of Auckland, New Zealand
- The University of Chicago, USA
- The University of Manchester, UK
- The University of Queensland, Australia
- The University of Sydney, Australia
- University College London, UK
- University of California, Los Angeles, USA
- University of California, San Diego, USA
- University of Exeter, UK
- University of Toronto, Canada
- Utrecht University, the Netherlands

b) Strong applications to work with other overseas renowned research-intensive institutions are also welcome. Ideally, the institutions should be ranked within the top 100 in major global university league tables.

#### 3. Eligibility

- Academic staff members ranked at Research Assistant Professors or above holding full-time employment at CUHK from all disciplines and at all levels are welcome to apply.
- Award holders are required to remain in university service for not less than a year upon completion of the activities in the proposal.
- Each CUHK applicant can only submit one application in each application round.

---

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about CUHK's research priorities, please visit [CUHK 2025: Research and Innovation](#).

#### 4. Activities & Scope of Support

Please refer to the table below for eligible and ineligible expenditures:

| Eligible Expenditures  | Ineligible Expenditures  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Travel, accommodation and subsistence for CUHK faculty members and incoming academic visitors<sup>2</sup></li><li>• Presentation of joint work at conferences</li><li>• Delivery and courier</li><li>• Organization of symposiums/ target workshops</li><li>• Salaries of personnel, e.g. short-term Research Assistants and clerical support staff</li><li>• Experiments and related consumables</li><li>• Data collection, e.g. surveys</li><li>• Small scale equipment necessary for the project</li><li>• Publications</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Replacement research/teaching costs</li><li>• Time of existing staff</li><li>• Scholarships and studentships</li><li>• Tuition fees</li><li>• Honoraria</li><li>• Visa application fees</li><li>• Covid-related test costs</li></ul> |

#### 5. Funding

- An award of up to HK\$150,000 will be provided to each selected application and will be paid to the CUHK PI upon the award.
- Projects will be funded for a period of 12 months during June 2025–May 2026.
- A budget should be provided and expenditure should be made according to the budget plan. Major changes to the expenditure plan will require prior approval.
- Procurement of goods and services should be adhered to the University's purchasing guidelines.
- The costs of accommodation and subsistence are capped at the per diem allowance designated for the city to be visited. The rate of per diem allowance can be found on the [CUHK Finance Office website](#). Only economy class airfares are supported.

#### 6. Application

- Each proposal must include a PI from CUHK and a PI from the partner institution(s).
- There should be at least one other research staff member (i.e. not PhD student) from each institution to be involved in the proposal, besides the PI.
- An [online application form](#) should be completed and submitted together with the following documents:
  - i. Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae of the PIs with a selected list of publications (max. 2 pages).
  - ii. A budget plan outlining all areas of expenditure with an itemised breakdown. To download the template, please click [here](#).
  - iii. An endorsement form to be completed by the CUHK heads of departments/units and faculty deans/directors of institutes to confirm their (1) support for the application, and (2) intention to renew the applicants' contract if the applicants' existing contract will expire within one year upon completion of the project. To download the form, please click [here](#).

---

<sup>2</sup> Please provide justifications in your application if travel expenses account for more than 50% of the proposed budget.

## 7. Award Selection

- Selection will be competitively assessed according to a number of criteria, including:
  - i. Academic merit and interdisciplinary/collaborative elements
  - ii. Relevancy to the Strategic Areas
  - iii. Potential of achieving high impact at international level
  - iv. Potential contribution to CUHK's research development and global engagement
  - v. Preference to be given to early/mid-career academic staff on substantiable-track contract
- Applicants will be notified of the results by May 2025.

## 8. Reporting

Award holders should submit a report outlining the outcomes, project impact and opportunities for future collaboration within one month upon completion of the project. The report should be endorsed by the head of the relevant department at CUHK.

## 9. Other Information

CUHK award holders will be responsible for arranging the practicalities of the visit, if applicable. They include, but are not limited to, traveling plans, visa application, accommodation, and personal health and hospitalisation insurance coverage as required. For outgoing visits, CUHK award holders will normally be covered under the "[CUHK's Group Travel Insurance \(Staff\)](#)". Award holders are advised to purchase additional travel insurance as deemed necessary<sup>3</sup>.

## 10. Enquiries

For enquiries, please contact Ms. Olivia Kwok, Office of Academic Links, on 3943-1315 or at [oliviakwok@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:oliviakwok@cuhk.edu.hk).

---

<sup>3</sup> CUHK award holders are responsible for purchasing adequate insurance to cover for their visits. CUHK is not liable for any loss, damage, cost, or expense whatsoever incurred by or attributable to any action or omission by any of the award holders in accordance with this award.