

Unified PhD Scholarship Framework

The main objectives of introducing the Unified PhD Scholarship Framework (UPSF) are:

1. To consolidate the current various schemes with streamlined quality assessment and selection of RPg applications
2. To provide clear criteria and guidelines on application requirements, information submission and selection process
3. To integrate with the centralized allocation of the UGC funded RPg places by phase (Details are to be finalized and announced in due course.)

Design Rationale and Principles

The framework includes two main schemes, namely PolyU Presidential PhD Fellowship Scheme (PPPFS) and 3+1 Top-up Funding Scheme (3+1), targeting at recruiting talented and high-quality RPg students. The framework includes both competitive and incentive schemes to cater various needs of university and academic staff's research and development.

To enhance the quality of PhD students at PolyU, the framework has developed criteria and processes for streamlined quality assessment.

1. To uphold the quality in student recruitment, the minimum requirements measure major quality attributes: university/subject reputation (UL), academic performance (AL), and research ability (RL). Different schemes have different requirement levels in UL, AL, and RL. Applicants' strength / talents in academic excellence and/or research ability and potential are taken into account in a fair and balanced way.
2. To facilitate a fair and reasonable assessment of the applications, the scoring mechanism is carefully planned to recognize different types and levels of merits of applicants. In considering the university rankings, the range covers reputable universities in Mainland China as well as top universities in different countries.
3. To enable a rigorous and holistic selection process, nominations for competitive schemes would go through pre-screening and the selection panel's evaluation.

The UPSF is built upon three key principles:

1. Discipline-general vs. Discipline-specificity

Follow a common standard for evaluation criteria to the largest extent possible while acknowledging the uniqueness of some disciplines by allowing D/SRCs to submit their discipline-specific criteria for FRC/SB's endorsement and GSB's approval.

2. Consistency vs. Holisticness

Consider both the efficiency using the same parameters and a holistic view of evaluation during the selection process with flexibility in allocation and evaluation, considering special university/department needs. In particular, develop a list of top-tier and second-tier national universities for countries which are not well covered in the three main world university rankings (not included or ranked not in PolyU's strategic directions).

3. Information submission: Trust vs. Accountability

Trust while holding D/SRCs accountable for the information submitted. Applications will be disqualified once false / wrong / incomplete information is identified.

(A) Schemes in the Framework

Scheme	Type	Description
PolyU Presidential PhD Fellowship Scheme (PPPFS)	Competitive	A prestigious scheme offers full stipends and extra benefits
3+1 Top-up Funding Scheme (3+1)	Competitive	GS provides up to 36-month stipends; staff contributes 12-month stipends from his/her own external grants or non-UGC funding which can be provided by his/her Department/School
	GRF/ECS Incentive	GS provides up to 36-month stipends; staff contributes 12-month stipends from his/her GRF/ECS grants (This incentive is provided once for each funded project.)
	University Incentive	GS provides up to 36-month stipends; University provides 12-month stipends for staff winning Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS), Global STEM Professorship Scheme (STEM) and Strategic Hiring Scheme (SHS).
	Strategic Development	GS provides up to 36-month stipends; Department/School or University provides 12-month stipends to support the special needs of Academic Department/School for strategic development.

Successful applicants will receive the scholarship packages of PPPFS or PolyU Research Postgraduate Scholarship (PRPgS) (for 3+1) to support their studies. Please refer to the details of the respective scholarship packages here: <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/gs/prospective-students/fellowship-scholarship-schemes/>

(B) Minimum Requirements of the Schemes

Applicants of the UPSF schemes must meet the **basic requirements** and **scheme entrance requirements**:

Basic Requirements		
a. meet the University's English language requirements and entrance requirements of PhD programmes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-year PhD programmes: normally hold an MPhil or equivalent (a research postgraduate degree with a dissertation as an award requirement); 4-year PhD programmes: normally hold a Master's degree or a Bachelor's degree with First Class Honours (or equivalent qualification) 		
b. have a high-quality research proposal; and		
c. have two strong referee's reports / reference letters in English.		
Scheme Entrance Requirements		
	PPPFS (Competitive)	3+1 (Competitive & Incentive)
First Degree University / Subject Ranking ⁺	QS/THE/ARWU World Top-200 Universities or Top-50 Subjects; or First-tier or second-tier national universities (link)	QS/THE/ARWU World Top-500 Universities or Top-150 Subjects; or First-tier or second-tier national universities (link)
First Degree GPA/ Class Ranking*	GPA ≥ 3.7/4.0; Top 15% of class; or First Class Honours	GPA ≥ 3.2/4.0 or Top 40% of class
OR		
Publication / Merit Score ⁺ (1 st , 2 nd and corresponding author / winner)	≥ 6	≥ 2
	Each JCR Q1 paper / Merit at or above national level = 3 scores. Each JCR Q2 paper / Merit at or above university level = 1 score.	

+ Please contact your D/SRC for the discipline-specific list of ranking and performance factors.

* Other grading systems should be converted using [the tool \(to be provided by GS\)](#). If the tool does not cover your grading system, please convert using your judgement. Submit the original scores in any case.

(C) Scoring Mechanism for Competitive Schemes

For competitive schemes (PPPFS and 3+1-Competitive), satisfying the minimum requirements does not guarantee the award of the scholarships. To select the awardees, the University Selection Panel meets periodically to evaluate the applications using the following scoring mechanism:

Department Input (Max. 10 scores)		
D*	Consider research proposal, reference letters and departmental impacts	10
First Degree University Ranking ⁺ (Max. 7 scores)		
UL5	QS/THE/ARWU Top 1-50 universities Top 1-20 subject universities First-tier national universities (link)	7
UL4	QS/THE/ARWU Top 51-200 universities Top 21-50 subject universities Second-tier national universities (link)	5
UL3	QS/THE/ARWU Top 201-300 universities Top 51-75 subject universities	3
UL2	QS/THE/ARWU Top 301-400 universities Top 76-100 subject universities	2

UL1	QS/THE/ARWU Top 401-500 universities Top 101-150 subject universities	1
First Degree GPA/ Class Ranking (Max. 8 scores)		
AL8	≥ 3.9 / Top 5%	8
AL7	≥ 3.8 - < 3.9 / Top 10% / First-class Honours	7
AL6	≥ 3.7 - < 3.8 / Top 15%	6
AL5	≥ 3.6 - < 3.7 / Top 20%	5
AL4	≥ 3.5 - < 3.6 / Top 25%	4
AL3	≥ 3.4 - < 3.5 / Top 30%	3
AL2	≥ 3.3 - < 3.4 / Top 35%	2
AL1	≥ 3.2 - < 3.3 / Top 40%	1
Publication / Merit⁺ (Max. 15 scores)		
RL2	JCR Q1 paper / Merit at or above national level	3@
RL1	JCR Q2 paper / Merit at or above university level	1@ (Max. 5 scores)
Bonus (Max. 5 scores)		
B	Master/MPhil degree from UL5 with GPA/class ranking of AL6 or above Professional or research-related work experience ⁺⁺ Community service/qualification(licenses) Prestigious exhibitions and performances Best paper awards at national/international conferences/journals ⁺⁺	1@ category

+ Please contact your D/SRC for the discipline-specific list of ranking and performance factors.

++ Only 1st, 2nd author counts

* For evaluating Research Proposals, consider indicators including clear abstract about the research, originality and significance of the research questions, feasibility of research plan, and quality of presentation. For reference letters, consider indicators including the evaluation of the candidate's research ability and potential, academic background and achievements, and soft skills. For department impacts, consider indicators including the extent of the need and benefit, expected outcomes and impact, and relevance to university / department development priority.

(D) Application Schedule and Submission Requirements

1. Competitive Schemes

Three rounds of selection will normally be held each year. There is no fixed quota for each round and the selection is based on the merits of applications.

A chief supervisor can nominate PhD applicants or MPhil students upon successful transfer of their registration to PhD for the Schemes.

Nominations must be submitted to GS via D/SRC through the nomination system (accessible via the GS website: https://www.polyu.edu.hk/gs/polyu_all_staff/UPSF).

The schedule of nominations for each round will be announced in due time. Nominations submitted after the deadline will be considered in the next round.

2. Incentive Schemes

Incentive schemes are not subject to any quota. Only new PhD applicants are eligible. PhD applicants meeting the minimum requirements will be awarded the scholarship and admitted to PolyU's PhD programmes all year round.

A Chief Supervisor must submit an application to GS via D/SRC through the application system (accessible via the GS website: https://www.polyu.edu.hk/gs/polyu_all_staff/UPSF).

3. Required Documents

New PhD applicants	Transfer from MPhil to PhD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full set of the application generated from Student Record System (SRS) with supporting documents • High-quality research proposal (Form GSB/1a) • Two strong referee's reports/reference letters in English • Duly signed and endorsed Form GSB/1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full set of the application generated from Student Record System (SRS) with supporting documents • High-quality research proposal (Form GSB/1a) • Two strong referee's reports/reference letters in English • MPhil confirmation report submitted by the student for D/SRC's assessment of transfer between MPhil and PhD • Duly signed and endorsed Form GSB/39A

4. Important Notes

- a. Applications with missing, incomplete and / or inaccurate information will not be considered.
- b. A supervisor exceeding the threshold in the number of student supervision will have a lower priority in bidding for the 3+1 competitive scheme. The University advises that the threshold is 20 with some flexibilities.
- c. One-year extension of the scholarship for students admitted to a 3-year PhD programme under the 3+1 scheme can be granted upon the end of the normal study period under the condition that the student must have achieved very satisfactory performance for two consecutive years.
- d. Supervisors contributing 12-month stipends from their project funds must have sufficient funding reserved in the stipend budget head of the project account concerned.
- e. The contribution by supervisors for the 3+1 Competitive Scheme must be made before the last year of the normal study period.
- f. At the time of admission, Heads of Departments/Deans of Schools are required to sign an undertaking stating that the Department or School will pay the stipends in the event that the chief supervisor cannot provide funding from his/her own grants.

3 May 2022