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Unified PhD Scholarship Framework

The Unified PhD Scholarship Framework (UPSF) was first introduced in April 2022 to consolidate the various central scholarship schemes with streamlined quality assessment and selection of RPg (research postgraduate) applications with financial support from PolyU central funding.

In September 2025, the UPSF is further refined to enhance the research synergy between supervisors and students. The refined UPSF aims to enhance staff performance and achieve greater output, with the existing number of UGC-funded RPg studentship places by increasing student quotas, ensuring balanced allocation, enhancing flexibility and autonomy, diversifying disciplines, and streamlining processes.

Objectives

1. To consolidate the various scholarships with central funding
2. To uphold the quality of student recruitment, considering essential components comprising both achievement and potential in a holistic review
3. To ensure optimal and fair use of resources for the most qualified PhD applicants by adopting a systematic approach to application selection and funding allocation

Supervision Eligibility

The supervision eligibility can be found [here](#).

Policy on Funding Allocation

To achieve different strategic goals set by the University, a budget is set aside for respective schemes. Certain policies are required to ensure funding is well used.

- For each Chief Supervisor, the maximum number of studentship years funded by all competitive schemes under UPSF, except for HKPFS awardees and HKPFS nominees (starting from 2026/27 Admissions Exercise onwards), is capped at 18, including both awardees and current PhD students within their normal study period.

(A) Schemes in the Framework and Scholarship Provisions

The UPSF cater to various needs of the University and PhD supervisors with different objectives and provisions of central funding. Please refer to the details of the respective scholarship packages here: <https://www.polyu.edu.hk/gs/prospective-students/fellowship-scholarship-schemes/>.

1. Competitive schemes

RGC Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme	
Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS)	HKPFS aims to attract the best and brightest students in the world to pursue their PhD studies in Hong Kong. The RGC and the University offer up to 48-month stipends with a tuition fee waiver and additional benefits.

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PolyU Distinctive Scholarships	
<u>PolyU Presidential PhD Fellowship Scheme (PPFS)</u>	A prestigious and highly competitive scheme designed for top candidates with exceptional academic/research achievements. The University offers up to 48-month stipends with a tuition fee waiver and additional benefits comparable to the HKPFS.
<u>International PhD Fellowship Scheme (IPFS)</u>	A competitive scheme aims at attracting high-calibre foreign students with remarkable academic achievements and other excellent credentials. The University provides up to 48-month stipends with a tuition fee waiver.
<u>PolyU Sports Scholarship Scheme for RPg Students (PSSS)</u>	A competitive scheme for PhD applicants who have a record of sporting success at national and/or international levels. The University offers up to 36-month stipends with a tuition fee waiver. Supervisors contribute the first 12-month stipends from external grants or non-UGC funding sources, e.g., DEA. The University provides the remaining stipends for up to 36 months.
PolyU Research Postgraduate Scholarship (PRPgS)	
PolyU Departmental/School Competitive PhD Funding	The PolyU Competitive PhD Funding is decentralised to Departments/Schools according to the DoKPIs and the size of the academic department. Supervisors contribute the first 12-month stipends from external grants or non-UGC funding sources, e.g., DEA. The University provides the remaining stipends for up to 36 months.
Dual PhD Degree Programmes (University Level – University Funded)	To enhance the financial capacity of supervisors to recruit quality PhD students for research and research collaboration, the University will provide different levels of financial support for each recommended application on a competitive basis. Scholarships are commensurate with students' achievements and potential according to their quality and funding availability. Supervisors first contribute the required number of studentship year(s) from external grants or non-UGC funding sources, e.g., DEA. The University provides the remaining stipends for up to 36 months.

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2. *Non-competitive schemes*

PolyU Research Postgraduate Scholarship (PRPgS)	
Strategic Allocation	<p>The University Central Management provides allocations for various strategic reasons to meet the development goals of the University. Typically, the University provides stipends for up to 36 or 48 months to cover the whole normal study period, unless specified below. Actual allocations for each category are subject to variation from time to time, as deemed appropriate by the Central Management.</p> <p>Currently, this sub-scheme includes the following university strategic allocation categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Awardees of the yearly GRF/ECS/HMRF (Investigator-initiated Projects or Research Fellowship)/SCOLAR (Research & Development Projects)/JRS (NSFC/RGC JRS, ANR/RGC or EU-HK Research Cooperation Co-funding Mechanism Research Project Grant only)¹ – Supervisors contribute the first 12-month stipends from the respective awarded grant/fund, except SCOLAR (e.g., GRF awardees must use the respective awarded GRF), the University provides the remaining stipends for up to 36 months. For each awarded grant/fund, only one PhD student can be admitted via this item. 2. Staff awarding new GRF/ECS for three consecutive years³ 3. Shortlisted for an interview but unsuccessful cases¹ (for the successful projects, please refer to Item 8): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. PC of the AoE, TRS, STG, State Awards b. PC of the CRF (CRPG, CREG, YCRG), RIF, RFS/SRFS, NSFC Category A/B, Xplorer/New Cornerstone – Supervisors contribute the first 12-month stipends; the University provides up to 36-month stipends 4. HKPFS nominees to RGC (the stronger candidates may receive the PPPFS/IPFS) 5. Assistant Professors or above appointed under the Global STEM Professorship Scheme (STEM) 6. Academic Staff appointed under the Strategic Hiring Scheme (SHS)/ Presidential Young Scholars Scheme (PYSS) (only applicable to the academic staff recruited with a date of reporting on or before 30 April 2025) 7. Non-STEM/Non-SHS new recruits

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	<p>8. Allocation of PhD places for awardees of Major/ Renowned Funding and Award Schemes managed by RIO</p> <p>9. Staff who is the first in the department publishing in Nature/Science series or Cell/PNAS as the first/corresponding author²</p> <p>10. Staff publishing in Nature/Science/Cell in a University appraisal cycle as the first/corresponding author²</p> <p>11. Staff publishing in Nature/Science/Cell in a University appraisal cycle as the co-first/co-corresponding author, PolyU is not the first affiliation – Supervisors contribute the first 12-month stipends; the University provides up to 36-month stipends²</p> <p>12. Special quota by SVP(RI)/VP(R) (e.g., Joint Research Centre)</p> <p>13. Other special cases, staff may submit requests for GS consideration, with funding support determined on a case-by-case basis</p>
<p>Dual PhD Degree Programmes (University/Faculty/School/ Departmental Level – Non-University Funded)</p>	<p>To foster PhD collaboration with selected strategic partners, the supervisor and/or Department/School provides stipends to the student, subject to the prevailing agreement signed with the partner.</p>
<p>Joint PhD Supervision Programmes Leading to a PolyU Degree</p>	<p>To foster external collaboration in research education with selected strategic partners, the Partner will provide a stipend for up to 24 months during the PhD student's stay at PolyU.</p>

¹ Each project can only be awarded once.

² Only “Article” and “Review” count. Each article/paper can only be awarded once.

³ Staff will be awarded a 3+1 PhD student quota for the first and second years of the respective grant or fund from item 1. To avoid double benefits, only one PhD quota will receive full central funding support in the third year.

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(B) Minimum Requirements of the Schemes

Applicants of the UPSF schemes must meet the **(I) university admission requirements and (II) scheme requirements**, including two strong referee reports in English.

I. University Admission Requirements	
<p>The University's English language requirements and the general entrance requirements of PhD programmes</p> <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) and a Bachelor's degree; • 4-year PhD programmes: normally hold a Master's degree and a Bachelor's degree <u>or</u> a Bachelor's degree with First Class Honours (or equivalent qualification) 	
II. Scheme Requirements	
RGC Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme	
<u>Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS)</u>	Please refer to the latest <u>Selection and Nomination for HKPFS</u> .
PolyU Distinctive Scholarships	
<u>PolyU Presidential PhD Fellowship Scheme (PPFS)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate exceptional academic achievements, high-quality international publications, outstanding references, and strong communication, interpersonal, and leadership skills. • Possess the academic strength of top-notch universities in the world.
<u>International PhD Fellowship Scheme (IPFS)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a passport for foreign nationals (excluding Mainland China, Taiwan and Macao), potential to contribute to the internationalisation of the University. • Achieve excellent academic results from a reputable university and demonstrate research ability/potential, leadership abilities.
<u>PolyU Sports Scholarship Scheme for RPg Students (PSSS)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have proven record(s) of success in sports at national and/or international levels. • Demonstrate the ability to balance academic responsibilities with their training and coaching commitments.

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PolyU Research Postgraduate Scholarship (PRPgS)	
PolyU Departmental/School Competitive PhD Funding ⁴	<p>Have a strong academic record and/or demonstrate good potential in research. <i>Academic Excellence</i>, and <i>Research Ability and Potential</i> are taken into account in a fair and balanced way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Excellence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Degree University Ranking: QS/THE/ARWU World Top-500 Universities or Top-150 Subjects or Top 5% National; AND 2. First Degree GPA/Class Ranking: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. For candidates who hold/will hold a MPhil or equivalent (a research postgraduate degree with a dissertation as an award requirement) or a Master's Degree: GPA \geq 3.2/4.0 or Top 40% of class; or ii. For candidates who hold /will hold a Bachelor's Degree only: First Class Honours (or equivalent qualification) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Ability and Potential One JCR Q1 paper or Two JCR Q2 papers or equivalent (1st or 2nd or corresponding author)⁵
Strategic Allocation	
Dual PhD Degree Programmes	
Joint PhD Supervision Programmes Leading to a PolyU Degree	

⁴ Departments/Schools are required to submit their allocation mechanism and selection criteria for GSB approval to ensure student quality, fairness to academic staff, and transparency.

⁵ Chief Supervisor is required to justify the equivalence of JCR Q1 and/or JCR Q2 papers for DoRPgS approval.

To facilitate D/SRC and the University Selection Panel to make fine distinctions among large numbers of applications, Chief Supervisors are held accountable for providing accurate and discreet written assessments when nominating a PhD applicant for scholarships with central funding. All parties involved are required to follow a common standard for assessment criteria as well as nominations, and the assessment process. Nominations will be disqualified once inaccurate/incomplete information is identified.

18 November 2025