

Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) Internship Programme

for ITF Projects

Application Guide

In 2004, the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) established an internship programme for organisations undertaking research and development (R&D) projects funded by ITF, including R&D Centres set up under the ITF, designated local public research institutes¹ and private sector companies to recruit interns to assist in R&D projects (“IP-ITF”). Since 19 December 2016, the programme has been expanded to cover incubatees and small and medium enterprise (SME)² tenants of the Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC) and Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (Cyberport) (“IP-SPC”). Starting from 19 December 2017, the programme has been further expanded to cover all innovation and technology (I&T) tenants of HKSTPC and Cyberport. This guide set out the details of the IP-ITF.

Eligibility

Applicant Organisation / Company

All organisations/companies undertaking R&D projects funded by the ITF³, including R&D Centres set up under the ITF, designated local public research institutes and private sector companies may apply for taking on interns under the IP-ITF. In general, the IP-ITF programme is only applicable to all on-going and new R&D projects funded by the ITF.

Intern

To qualify for the IP-ITF, the recruited intern should be a graduate⁴ (including non-local graduates) with a first-degree or higher degree from a local university. He/she should be a graduate in the relevant field of the research project to which he/she is to be recruited. For private company applicant, the intern to be recruited should not be employed by the company within the past three months preceding the date of application.

Internship Period

In order for the intern to contribute meaningfully to the ITF project on the one hand, and have sufficient time to learn on the job on the other, the intern is to be recruited to assist in a particular

¹ They are local universities, self-financing degree-awarding institutions registered under the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320), Hong Kong Productivity Council, Vocational Training Council, Clothing Industry Training Authority and Hong Kong Institute of Biotechnology.

² SME refers to manufacturing businesses employing fewer than 100 persons in Hong Kong or non-manufacturing businesses employing fewer than 50 persons in Hong Kong. The number of persons employed shall include proprietors/partners/shareholders actively engaged in the work of the business and all salaried employees of the enterprise.

³ R&D projects funded by the ITF include projects funded under the Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP), the Matching Grant for Joint Research Scheme (UIM) of the University-Industry Collaboration Programme (UICP), the Small Entrepreneur Research Assistance Programme (SERAP), the Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS) and the Midstream Research Programme for Universities (MRP).

⁴ The graduate should have successfully completed the undergraduate/postgraduate programme.

project for at least 6 months. Upon completion of internship in a project, he/she will be allowed to participate in another internship under the IP-ITF and the IP-SPC⁵. Unless otherwise approved by ITC, the total internship period under the Internship Programme viz. IP-ITF and IP-SPC for an intern should not be more than 24 months in total. For the first project in which the intern participates, the applicant organisation/company is encouraged to offer the intern an internship of no less than 12 months. Two interns can be recruited at any one time to assist in an ITF project. In case the intern recruited for a project resigns/leaves, the applicant organisation/company can replace the intern during the project period. The applicant organisation/company should follow the established human resources practice of the organisation/company in the recruitment of the intern.

Application Procedure

Applicant organisation/company should have its ITF project approved under the ITF and an intern selected/identified before submission of the application form to the ITF Secretariat. For each selected intern, the applicant organisation/company should submit a separate application electronically through the Innovation and Technology Commission Funding Administrative System at the ITF website <http://www.itf.gov.hk>. The applicant organisation/company should provide certified copies of documents on the academic qualification of the intern to be recruited. New application should be submitted for additional/replacement intern and for transferring an approved intern to assist another ITF project. Subject to approval by ITC, the applicant organisation/company can proceed with the formal recruitment of the intern. Once approved by ITC, the conditions of funding as set out in this Guide would form part of the project agreement of the respective ITF project. Expenses of and payment to the intern would be additional to the approved project budget, but would also form part of the project account for accounting and auditing purposes. No virement into or out of the approved internship funding is allowed.

Remuneration for Interns

The ITF will provide a maximum monthly allowance of HK\$ 16,000 plus the employer's contribution to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) (i.e. HK\$ 800 maximum) for each intern who possesses a first degree, and up to HK\$ 19,000 for those with a Master's or higher degree plus the employer's MPF contribution (i.e. HK\$ 950 maximum). The monthly allowance should be paid in full towards the actual lump sum monthly remuneration for the intern who participates in the ITF project and should not, in whole or in part, be retained by the applicant organisation/company for whatever reasons. No other allowances, overhead or fringe benefits, etc. will be payable from the ITF. The monthly allowance will be provided to the applicant organisation/company concerned as part of the ITF project instalment payment.

Role of Applicant Organisation/Company

The applicant organisation/company should:

- ensure that the intern selection process is fair and without prejudice to any candidates;
- ensure that the intern is suitably guided by a supervisor (preferably the project coordinator/deputy project coordinator of the ITF project), to whom the intern can report on a daily basis;

⁵ The internship period under IP-ITF should not overlap with any internship period under IP-SPC of the same applicant organisation/company.

- assign to the intern relevant R&D duties (not secretarial or administrative duties) related to the ITF project and with an appropriate level of workload which warrants a full-time internship;
- comply with the relevant legislative requirements concerning the employment of the intern including the relevant entry/visa requirements for non-local graduates; and
- provide a safe working environment and arrange the placement for the intern.

Role of Intern

The intern being recruited for the ITF project should assist in the R&D work of the funded project on a full-time basis.

Reporting Requirement

Both the applicant organisation/company and the intern are required to submit evaluation reports to ITC within one month from the completion or termination of the internship in each of the ITF project for which the intern is recruited. In case of resignation of the intern during the internship period or if the applicant organisation/company intends to terminate the internship, the applicant organisation/company should report such to the ITC immediately. The applicant organisation/company is also required to keep the relevant financial documents (e.g. copies of cheques issued to the intern, payroll sheets, or certified receipts signed by the intern, etc.) for seven years after completion/termination of the internship, and submit to ITC on request at any time during this period.

Return of Fund

The applicant organisation/company should return all unused fund and accrued interest to the Government together with the evaluation reports to ITC within one month upon completion or termination of the internship.

Handling of Information

Information provided by the applicant organisation/company in its application and evaluation reports will be kept in confidence. It may however be disclosed to relevant parties to process the application, to conduct research and survey, and if the application is successful, to monitor the internship, to exercise the Government's rights, and for other related purposes.

Important Notes

Inaccurate and incomplete information may affect the consideration and processing of the applications and may result in deferral or rejection. Applicant organisations/companies should note that any misrepresentation or omission of information in the applications or evaluation reports may lead to rejection of the applications and/or full recovery of the monthly allowances already granted by the ITC, and possible court proceedings.

The ITC reserves at all times the absolute right to review all applications and adjust the ITF approved as necessary. In the event that there is an overpayment due to error in calculation or assessment, applicant organisations/companies are required to refund the amount overpaid within one month upon notification.

Innovation and Technology Commission

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