



**Technology Talent Scheme – Postdoctoral Hub
for Incubatees and Innovation and Technology Tenants of the
Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation and
Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited
Application Guide**

To nurture and bring together more technology talent and encourage them to pursue a career in innovation and scientific research, the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) launched the Postdoctoral Hub in August 2018. Postdoctoral Hub provides organisations/companies undertaking Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF)-funded research and development (R&D) projects¹ (“PH-ITF”), start-ups selected for co-investment under the Innovation and Technology Venture Fund (“PH-ITVF”), incubatees and innovation and technology (I&T) tenants of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC) and Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (Cyberport) (“PH-SPC”), as well as technology companies conducting R&D activities in Hong Kong (“PH-TC”) with funding support for the engagement of postdoctoral talent to conduct R&D work. Start-ups selected for co-investment under ITVF or technology companies conducting R&D activities in Hong Kong who are also incubatees and I&T tenants of HKSTPC and Cyberport should apply under the PH-SPC.

2. This guide sets out the details of the **PH-SPC**. For PH-ITF, and PH-ITVF and PH-TC, please refer to the respective Application Guides on the ITF website (<https://www.itf.gov.hk/1-eng/TTS-PH.asp>).

Eligibility

Applicant Company

3. Incubatees and I&T tenants² of HKSTPC and Cyberport, with incubation/tenancy duration covering the proposed engagement period, are eligible to apply for funding to engage

¹ R&D projects funded by the ITF include projects funded under the Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP), the Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme (TCFS), the Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme (MHKJFS), the Partnership Research Programme (PRP), the Matching Grant for Joint Research Scheme (UIM) of the University-Industry Collaboration Programme (UICP), Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS), the Midstream Research Programme for Universities (MRP), as well as R&D projects undertaken by research centres and laboratories set up in the research clusters of the InnoHK.

² The core business activities of the applicant company should be technology-intensive and innovation-based. The applicant company’s operations should not be primarily in mass production, although small scale pilot production or high value-added production in support of product and market development and innovation may be permitted. This programme is also applicable to tenants of the Healthcare Devices Innovation Hub (HDIH), Biomedical Technology Support Center (BSC) and ICT Co-working Center of HKSTPC and Smart-Space of Cyberport. However, those tenants must fulfill the following additional conditions to be eligible for this programme:

- (a) the applicant company must have a remaining lease term/tenancy period of at least 9 months with HKSTPC/Cyberport at the time of application which should cover the engagement period;
- (b) the applicant company must have a fixed office room/space with dedicated workstation(s) for the postdoctoral talent. Floating seats, including the Flexi-Space of Cyberport, will not be accepted;
- (c) detailed checking will be carried out by HKSTPC/Cyberport at the beginning and at the end of the engagement

postdoctoral talent to conduct R&D activities in their companies. The applicant company should state in the application the R&D activities it is engaged in or plans to conduct in Hong Kong and also describe the R&D duties to be assigned to the postdoctoral talent.

Postdoctoral Talent

4. To qualify for PH-SPC, the postdoctoral talent must be legally permitted to work in Hong Kong; and in possession of a doctoral degree of STEM³-related discipline obtained from a local university. For candidate with relevant qualification obtained from non-local institution, the candidate is eligible to participate in the PH-SPC if the qualification awarding institution is among the top 100 institutions for STEM-related subjects in the *latest publication* of any of the following world university ranking tables:

| Ranking Tables | STEM-related subjects |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engineering and Technology - Life Science and Medicine - Natural Sciences |
| Shanghai Jiao Tong University | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life and Agriculture Sciences (LIFE) - Natural Sciences and Mathematics (SCI) - Engineering/Technology and Computer Sciences (ENG) - Clinical Medicine and Pharmacy (MED) |
| Times Higher Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engineering and Technology - Computer Science - Life Sciences - Physical Sciences - Clinical, Pre-clinical and Health |

5. For qualification obtained from other non-local institution, the candidate should provide relevant document(s), such as the qualification assessment report issued by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), supporting that the specific skills possessed by the candidate or the equivalence of the qualification concerned being assessed is on the doctoral level for consideration. The recruitment of talent should go through an open process (e.g. to advertise position via mass media, online platform, etc.) to ensure fairness. The proprietor, partner, shareholder or management of the applicant company or their relatives is not eligible to be engaged as a postdoctoral talent under the programme.

6. The postdoctoral talent should be a graduate⁴ in the relevant field of the research activities in which he/she is to be engaged.

period, with one or two pre-arranged visits in between; and
 (d) the applicant company must provide their postdoctoral talent training plan, and progress evaluation form for HKSTPC/Cyberport and ITC to understand better how the postdoctoral talent has been doing the tasks assigned and whether the job is R&D-related.

³ STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

⁴ The graduate should have successfully completed the doctoral programme.

7. The applicant company and the postdoctoral talent shall not be receiving other employment subsidies provided by any other local public funding for the subject engagement under application.

R&D Activities

8. For the purpose of PH-SPC, an R&D activity is –

- (a) an activity in the fields of natural or applied science to extend knowledge;
- (b) an original and planned investigation carried on with the prospect of gaining new scientific or technical knowledge and understanding; or
- (c) the application of research findings or other knowledge to a plan or design for producing or introducing new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, processes, systems or services before they are commercially produced or used.

9. In general, an R&D activity takes place when a project seeks to achieve an advance in science or technology. Any activity which does not directly contribute to achieving this advance in science or technology through the resolution of scientific or technological uncertainty is not an R&D activity. The following activities are **NOT** considered to be R&D activities for the purpose of PH-SPC –

- (a) any efficiency survey, feasibility study, management study, market research or sales promotion;
- (b) the application of any publicly available research findings or other knowledge to a plan or design, with an anticipated outcome and without any scientific or technological uncertainty;
- (c) an activity that does not seek to directly contribute to achieving an advance in science or technology by resolving scientific or technological uncertainty;
- (d) any work to develop the non-scientific or non-technological aspect of a new or substantially improved material, device, product, process, system or service;
- (e) quality control;
- (f) routine testing of materials, devices, products, processes, systems or services;
- (g) routine data collection;
- (h) routine, cosmetic or stylistic modifications or changes to materials, devices, products, processes, systems or services;
- (i) market survey for the purpose of ascertaining the needs of customers where no systematic, investigative or experimental activity is involved; and
- (j) production and distribution of goods and services.

10. The list is by no means exhaustive.

11. To be eligible for funding under PH-SPC, the applicant company must be conducting or plans to conduct R&D activities in Hong Kong and the duties assigned by the applicant company to the postdoctoral talent must primarily consist of R&D activities.

Engagement Period

12. In order for the postdoctoral talent to contribute meaningfully to the R&D activities, the engagement period for the candidate should be **no less than 6 months**; and should not overlap with any other engagement period under the Postdoctoral Hub or the Researcher Programme. Upon completion of the engagement in an applicant company, the postdoctoral talent may be engaged again under the Postdoctoral Hub. Unless otherwise approved by ITC, **the total engagement period for a postdoctoral talent under the Postdoctoral Hub viz. PH-ITF, PH-SPC, PH-ITVF and PH-TC should be no more than 36 months in total**. Two postdoctoral talent can be engaged at any one time to assist in the R&D work of an applicant company. **The total engagement period for an applicant company under PH-ITVF, PH-SPC and PH-TC should be no more than 72 months**. In case the postdoctoral talent engaged for a project resigns/leaves, the applicant company can engage another talent as replacement during the incubation/tenancy period.

Application Procedure

13. Applicant companies should register for the purpose of the PH-SPC through the Innovation and Technology Commission Funding Administrative System (ITCFAS) at the ITF website (<https://itcfas.itf.gov.hk>). For each selected postdoctoral talent, the applicant company should submit a separate application via ITCFAS. New application should be submitted for engagement of an additional/replacement postdoctoral talent, or for transferring an approved talent to another company. The applicant company should also provide certified copies of the following supporting documents:

- (a) Incubation/tenancy contract of the applicant company;
- (b) Business registration certificate of the applicant company;
- (c) Qualification document of the postdoctoral talent;
- (d) Recruitment advertisement for the postdoctoral talent; and
- (e) Employment contract of the postdoctoral talent (where applicable).

14. On receipt of a complete application, ITCFAS will notify HKSTPC and Cyberport for conducting of preliminary vetting (e.g. to confirm incubation/tenancy status and eligibility under the PH-SPC). The applicant company will be notified if an application is not recommended for processing by ITC. Applications recommended by HKSTPC and Cyberport will continue to be processed by ITC. ITC reserves the right to request additional information and supporting documents when necessary. If any applicant company fails to respond to ITC's request for information/supporting documents within two months of such request, the application will be considered withdrawn. ITC reserves the right to decline acceptance of any recommended applications at any time at its sole discretion.

15. Once the application is approved by ITC, the applicant company should comply with the conditions of funding as set out in this Guide throughout the engagement period, and keep relevant records for the engagement as required in section 7 below. The ITC and the

recommending organisation (i.e. HKSTPC or Cyberport) reserve at all times the right to seek or collect additional information (e.g. postdoctoral talent's attendance records) from the applicant company and the selected postdoctoral talent to monitor the approved application where necessary.

16. For any subsequent change to the details of the engagement (e.g. change in engagement duration, salary adjustment, etc.), the applicant company should submit a **change request** electronically through the ITCFAS (<https://itcfas.itf.gov.hk>) for prior approval by ITC.

Remuneration for Postdoctoral Talent

17. The ITF will provide a maximum monthly allowance of HK\$32,000 plus the employer's contribution to the Mandatory Provident Fund (i.e. HK\$1,500 maximum) for each postdoctoral talent. **The monthly allowance shall only cover the engagement period stipulated in the approved application**, and shall be paid in full towards the actual lump sum monthly remuneration for the postdoctoral talent and shall not, in whole or in part, be retained by the applicant 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 company on a reimbursement basis after acceptance of the progress report by ITC (i.e. on a half-yearly basis in general) as detailed in section 7 below.

Role of Applicant Company

18. The applicant company should:

- ensure that the postdoctoral talent selection process is open, fair and without prejudice to any candidates. To avoid conflict of interest, in selecting a researcher, the applicant company must not engage a researcher who is the proprietor, partner, shareholder or management of the applicant company or their relatives. The applicant company or any person/staff authorised by the applicant company to handle or in any way to be involved in the selection process should declare that they have no actual or potential conflict of interest; or otherwise should not participate in the selection process;
- ensure that the postdoctoral talent is suitably guided by a supervisor, to whom the talent can report or consult on a daily basis;
- assign to the postdoctoral talent relevant R&D duties (not secretarial or administrative duties) and with an appropriate level of workload which warrants a full-time employment;
- comply with the relevant legislative requirements concerning the employment of the postdoctoral talent including the relevant entry/visa requirements for non-local talent; and
- provide a safe working environment and arrange a proper workplace for the postdoctoral talent, including allocating a fixed office room/space with dedicated workstation(s) for the talent.

Role of Postdoctoral Talent

19. The postdoctoral talent being engaged should assist in the R&D work of the applicant company on a full-time basis.

Reporting Requirement

20. The applicant company is required to submit progress report(s), signed by both the programme coordinator and the postdoctoral talent, on a half-yearly basis in general throughout the engagement period. HKSTPC and Cyberport will conduct vetting of the report and recommend acceptance of it by ITC. In this connection, HKSTPC and Cyberport will visit and interview the applicant companies and postdoctoral talent from time to time during the engagement period for monitoring purposes.

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

Handling of Information

22. Information provided by the applicant company in its application and progress/evaluation reports will be kept in confidence. It may however be disclosed to the recommending organisation (i.e. HKSTPC or Cyberport) and relevant parties to process the application, to conduct research and survey, and if the application is successful, to monitor the engagement, to exercise the Government's rights, and for other related purposes.

Important Notes

23. Inaccurate and incomplete information may affect the consideration and processing of the applications and may result in deferral or rejection. Applicant companies should note that any misrepresentation or omission of information in the applications or progress/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.

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

Innovation and Technology Commission
March 2020