



**Innovation and Technology Fund
Technology Talent Scheme
Postdoctoral Hub
for
Technology Companies Conducting
Research and Development Activities in Hong Kong**

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 to provide 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”) as well as 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”) with funding support for the engagement of postdoctoral talent to conduct R&D work. From March 2020, the funding support is further extended to technology companies conducting R&D activities in Hong Kong (“PH-TC”).

This guide sets out the details of **PH-TC**. For PH-ITF, PH-ITVF and PH-SPC, please refer to [PH-ITF Application Guide](#), [PH-ITVF Application Guide](#) and [PH-SPC Application Guide](#) respectively.

1. Eligibility

Applicant Company

A technology company which is conducting or plans to conduct R&D activities (see below for definition of R&D activities) in Hong Kong is eligible to apply for funding under PH-TC to engage postdoctoral talent to conduct R&D work if it is –

- (a) registered in Hong Kong under the Business Registration Ordinance (Cap.310) or incorporated in Hong Kong under the Companies Ordinance (Cap.622); and
- (b) not a government subvented organisation or a subsidiary of any government subvented organisation².

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), the Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS), and 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 A government subvented organisation means an organisation that receives grant from the government on a recurrent basis. The grant contributes towards the organisation’s operational expenses, in exchange of its service to the public. The

The applicant company must have substantive business operations in Hong Kong. A shell company or a company having most of its main business operations outside Hong Kong will not be regarded as having substantive business operations in Hong Kong. The applicant must provide documentary evidence proving its substantive business operations in Hong Kong at the time of application.

Incubatees and I&T tenants of HKSTPC and Cyberport should apply under PH-SPC.

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.

ITC reserves at all times the right to determine whether an entity is eligible to apply for funding under PH-TC.

Postdoctoral Talent

To qualify for PH-TC, the talent must be legally permitted to work in Hong Kong; and in possession of a doctoral degree of a STEM³-related discipline obtained from a local university. For candidates with the relevant qualification obtained from a non-local institution, the candidate is eligible to participate in the PH-TC 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

recurrent grant may account for the bulk of the organisation’s income or may just be a token contribution/sponsorship forming a small percentage of the organisation’s total income.

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

For qualifications obtained from other non-local institutions, 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 talent 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 are not eligible to be engaged as postdoctoral talents under the PH-TC.

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

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

For the purpose of PH-TC, 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.

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-TC –

- (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;

⁴ The graduate should have successfully completed the doctoral programme.

- (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.

The list is by no means exhaustive.

To be eligible for funding under PH-TC, 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.

2. Engagement Period

In order for the postdoctoral talent to contribute meaningfully to the R&D activities, the engagement period for the talent 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 the company, the postdoctoral talent may be engaged again by another company 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-ITVF, PH-SPC and PH-TC should be no more than 36 months in total.** Two postdoctoral talents can be engaged by an applicant company at any one time to conduct R&D activities of the 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 resigns/leaves, the applicant company can recruit another talent as replacement.

3. Application Procedure

PH-TC is open for application throughout the year.

Applicant companies should register for the purpose of the PH-TC 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. A new application should be submitted for the engagement of an additional/replacement postdoctoral talent, or for transferring an approved talent to another company.

The applicant company should assign a person as the “project coordinator” of the application to act as the main contact point between the applicant company and ITC. The project coordinator should be able to fully represent the applicant company. As such, the project coordinator must be a responsible personnel of the applicant company. The project coordinator should also be responsible for direct supervision of the postdoctoral talent under application, overseeing the management and reporting of the engagement of the postdoctoral talent generally, ensuring the proper usage of approved funds in accordance with ITC guidelines and instructions, liaising with and answering all enquiries/requests raised by ITC for information and clarification on all aspects of the engagement of the postdoctoral talent.

The applicant company should provide copy of the following supporting documents:

- (a) Business Registration Certificate or Certificate of Incorporation;
- (b) Form 1(a)/1(c) of the Business Registration Office or the latest Annual Return filed with the Registrar of Companies (Form NAR1);
- (c) Tenancy agreement/other documentary proof showing the premises for conducting R&D activities;
- (d) Employment contract and payroll proof issued within one month of the date of application of at least one existing staff member. If he/she is an R&D staff member, please provide the CV as well;
- (e) Qualification document of the postdoctoral talent;
- (f) Recruitment advertisement for the postdoctoral talent;
- (g) Identity proof of the postdoctoral talent;
- (h) Rental agreement/receipts/instalment payment records of R&D facilities/equipment, if available;
- (i) Latest Supplementary Form S3 – Expenditure on research & development (Form BIRS3) and the latest Tax Assessment (I.R.C. 1931) of Inland Revenue Department, if available; and
- (j) Employment contract of the postdoctoral talent (where applicable).

ITC reserves the right to request additional information and supporting documents when necessary. If 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. Ineligible or incomplete application will be returned to the applicant company.

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. ITC reserves 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.

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.

4. Remuneration for Postdoctoral Talent

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 should 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.

5. Role of Applicant Company

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 postdoctoral talent, the applicant company must not engage a postdoctoral talent 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 R&D duties and with an appropriate level of workload which warrants a full-time engagement;
- 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).

6. Role of Postdoctoral Talent

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

7. Reporting Requirement

The applicant company is required to submit progress report(s), signed by both the project coordinator and the postdoctoral talent, on a half-yearly basis in general throughout the engagement period. ITC will conduct vetting of the report and may visit and interview the applicant company and postdoctoral talent from time to time during the engagement period for monitoring purposes.

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 ITC immediately. The applicant company is also required to keep the relevant financial documents (e.g. copy of cheques issued to the postdoctoral talent, payroll sheets or 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.

8. Handling of Information

Information provided by the applicant company in its application and progress/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 engagement, to exercise the Government's rights, and for other related purposes.

9. Important Notes

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

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.

10. Enquiries

For enquiries on this Guide and the PH-TC application, please contact –

Innovation and Technology Commission
Unit 1275, 12/F, Kowloonbay International Trade & Exhibition Centre
1 Trademart Drive
Kowloon Bay
Kowloon
Hong Kong
Tel.: (852) 3655 5678
E-mail: phtc-enquiry@itc.gov.hk

Innovation and Technology Commission
March 2020