



Innovation and Technology Fund Postdoctoral Hub for Innovation and Technology Venture Fund Investee Companies 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”) 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 recruitment of postdoctoral talent to conduct R&D work. Incubatees and I&T tenants of HKSTPC and Cyberport who are also start-ups selected for co-investment under ITVF should apply under the PH-SPC.

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

1. Eligibility

Applicant Company

Start-ups selected for co-investment under the Innovation and Technology Venture Fund (ITVF investee companies)² are eligible to apply for funding under PH-ITVF to recruit postdoctoral talent to assist in R&D projects in their companies. The applicant company should state in the application the scientific/engineering R&D element the project is to study and investigate and also describe the project duties to be assigned to the postdoctoral talent.

Postdoctoral Talent

To qualify for PH-ITVF, the candidate 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-ITVF 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:

¹ R&D projects funded by the ITF include projects funded under the Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP), the Partnership Research Programme (PRP), the Matching Grant for Joint Research Scheme (UIM) of the University-Industry Collaboration Programme (UICP), Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS), and the Midstream Research Programme for Universities (MRP).

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.

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

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

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. Moreover, the proprietor, partner or shareholder of the applicant company is not eligible to be engaged as a postdoctoral talent under the programme. The postdoctoral talent should be a graduate⁴ in the relevant field of the research project to which he/she is to be recruited.

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.

2. Engagement Period

In order for the postdoctoral talent to contribute meaningfully to the R&D project, 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 and PH-ITVF should be no more than 36 months in total.** Two postdoctoral talents can be recruited at any one time to assist in the R&D work of an applicant company. The total engagement period for an applicant company should be no more than 72 months. In case the postdoctoral talent recruited for a project resigns/leaves, the applicant company can recruit another postdoctoral talent as replacement if it is still an ITVF investee company.

⁴ The graduate should have successfully completed the doctoral programme.

3. Application Procedure

The applicant company should duly complete the application form which is available from the ITF website (<https://www.itf.gov.hk/l-eng/Forms/ph-itf-itvf201902e.zip>). For each selected postdoctoral talent, the applicant company should submit a separate application. 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) Business registration certificate of the applicant company;
- (b) Qualification document of the postdoctoral talent;
- (c) Recruitment advertisement for the postdoctoral talent; and
- (d) Employment contract of the postdoctoral talent (where applicable).

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 applications at any time at its sole discretion.

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 substantiate and process the application, and 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 for ITC's prior approval.

4. Remuneration

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.

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;
- 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.

6. Role of Postdoctoral Talent

The postdoctoral talent being recruited should assist in the 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 programme 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/or interview the applicant company and the 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 for which the postdoctoral talent is recruited. 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.

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. The applicant company 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 the ITC, and possible court proceedings.

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, the applicant company is required to refund the amount overpaid within one month upon notification.

Innovation and Technology Commission
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