USyd-CUHK Ignition Grants
Guidelines for Applicants

Application Deadline: 29 September 2023 (23:59 AEST / 21:59 HKT)

Purpose

As strategic partners, the University of Sydney (USyd) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) are committed to achieving impact through collaboration in research and education.

The Ignition Grants, formerly known as the Partnership Collaboration Awards, support researchers from USyd and CUHK to facilitate and support collaborative projects that develop multidisciplinary cutting-edge research to create academic and societal impact. These grants are designed to provide researchers, in particular early- and mid-career researchers, with the opportunity to work with our strategic partner in developing joint research projects. It is expected that all funded projects will evolve into larger scale projects, sustained by leveraging external funding. Evidence of external funding submissions will be required in the final project reports.

Proposals from all research areas are welcome. Projects which are multidisciplinary in nature or seek to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals are highly encouraged.

For each successful application, USyd and CUHK will contribute up to AUD10,000 and HK$60,000, respectively. Based on available funding, we expect to award up to five (5) projects.

1. Eligibility

1.1. Proposals are invited from academic staff from all disciplines at USyd and CUHK and their affiliated Research Centres and Institutes.

1.2. An application must have two chief investigators, one from USyd and one from CUHK. These two individuals are responsible for jointly submitting the application, verifying the accuracy of the information in the application, and ensuring that the funding, if granted, is used in accordance with the intent as stated in the application.

1.3. Preference will be given to teams which include PhD or masters by research students, postdocs, early- and mid-career researchers and researchers on sabbatical leave, rather than one-to-one research projects.

1.4. Applicants from affiliated Research Centres and Institutes must be University Title Holders (applicable only to applicants from USyd).

1.5. Chief Investigators
- **USyd**: Chief Investigators must either be employed on a full-time, part-time (appointed at least 0.5 FTE), fixed term or continuing basis at USyd or one of its officially affiliated Research Centres or Institutes. If on a fixed term contract, the end date must be beyond the funding period.
- **CUHK**: Chief Investigators must hold full-time employment and are required to remain in university service for not less than a year upon completion of the proposed project.

1.6. Emeritus faculty, PhD and masters by research students, post-docs, and research assistants/associates are not eligible to apply as Chief Investigators but they are welcome to join the projects as collaborators.

1.7. Current recipients of other funding from the USyd Office of Global & Research Engagement whose projects are still ongoing and will not have finished by the application close date may apply for concurrent grants but are required to submit a progress report of their current project when submitting their application. The progress report should be an attachment to the application – single page, narrative update on project progress to date and unexpended award balance.

1.8. Previous recipients of other funding from the USyd Office of Global & Research Engagement whose projects have finished or will have finished by the application close date may only apply for consecutive grants if they have submitted their final report.

2. Duration

Projects may run from 1 December 2023 until 30 November 2024.

3. Timeline

Applications open	15 August 2023
Applications close	29 September 2023 23:59 AEST / 21:59 HKT
Applicants notified	Mid November 2023
Projects can start from	1 December 2023
Latest date for projects to end	30 November 2024
Final reports due	28 February 2025
Final reports update	30 November 2025

4. Eligible Grant Activities

4.1. Expenses/activities that **will be considered** for funding include:
- Airfares: Only travel on economy class will be considered
- Other travel expenses (e.g. train, rental car)
- Costs for hosting a seminar/conference or workshop
- Accommodation and subsistence
- Consumables
- Publications and printing costs

4.2. All travel activities must comply with the guidelines of the respective universities:
- **USyd** – All travel must comply with the Travel Policy 2018 and follow all relevant processes and policies, including travel insurance as outlined on the Travel intranet page. USyd researchers should refer to www.smartraveller.gov.au for the latest visa and travel advice.
- **CUHK**
  - The costs of accommodation and subsistence are capped at the per diem allowance designated for the city to be visited. The rate of per diem allowance can be found on the CUHK Finance Office website.
  - CUHK award holders will be responsible for arranging the practicalities of the visit, if applicable. They include but are not limited to, traveling plans, visa application, accommodation, and personal health and hospitalisation insurance coverage as required.

- For outgoing visits, CUHK award holders will normally be covered under the "CUHK's Group Travel Insurance (Staff)". Award holders are advised to purchase additional travel insurance as deemed necessary[1].

4.3. Activities that **will not be considered** for funding:
- General teaching;
- An individual staff member's research projects, unless as catalytic funding for the establishment of an international research collaboration with the prospect of external funding;
- Event registration fees;
- Website development;
- Salaries or salary supplementation, and honoraria;
- Scholarships or course fees for students;
- Bench fees;
- Mobile phone cards;
- Entertainment costs; and
- Computers, including laptops (excluding access to high-performance computers or other specialised applications that are justified by the project) and basic computing facilities such as printers, word processing and other standard software.

5. Submission Requirements

All proposals must be submitted online and include the following elements:
- Ignition Grants Application Form (online)
  - Details of team involved and the role and contribution of each member
  - Project details (title, abstract, description in layman's terms)
  - Expected outcomes
  - Selection criteria (see point 6)
  - Project timeline
  - Project budget
- CV of the Chief Investigator of each university (maximum two pages in length for each CV) which should include:
  - Qualifications, current position, and employment history
  - 10 career-best publications
  - Awards and relevant presentations
  - Current grant income
  - Collaborative track record (limited to 200 words)
- A brief letter of support in English on official letterhead from any additional institution/organisation (other than USyd or CUHK) that intends to formally collaborate.
- Endorsement by the relevant USyd Head of School. A pre-filled Endorsement Coversheet is automatically generated by the application system after completion of the Ignition Grants Application Form (online) and sent to the USyd Chief Investigator's email for this purpose. The signed coversheet must to be uploaded **before** submission. Digital signatures are acceptable.
- An endorsement form, completed by the CUHK Heads of Departments/Units and Faculty Deans/Directors of Institutes to confirm their intention of renewing the applicants' contract, if applicable, and their support for the application. Refer to section 9 to download the form.

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[1] CUHK award holders are responsible for purchasing adequate insurance to cover for their visits. CUHK is not liable for any loss, damage, cost, or expense whatsoever incurred by or attributable to any action or omission by any of the award holders.

6. Scoring and Selection Criteria

6.1. Priority is given to applications that align with the strategic research areas of both universities. Applications in other fields showing good prospect of sustainability are also welcome.

6.2. Criteria do not have weightings; proposals are assessed holistically. Each proposal will be assessed according to the selection criteria described below.

Score	Category	Justification
4	Excellent	Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor
3	Very Good	Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
2	Good	Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
1	Weak	Criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses

Selection Criteria	Description
Quality & Relevance	• Clearly describe the objectives and methodology to be employed with the project. The alignment with strategic priorities and the objectives of the funding scheme will be considered in combination with the soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology. (Note: Proposals should use clear writing appropriate for non-specialists and make a strong case for the importance of the project to reviewers outside the discipline. It is strongly advised that the proposals avoid jargon and unexplained abbreviations). • Explain how the participants in the research team will bring together the necessary expertise to carry out the project. The 2-page CVs of the Chief Investigators will be taken into consideration. • 300 word maximum
Execution	• Elaborate on the workplan and milestones outlined in the timeframe (there are separate sections in the application form for an outline of activities in the Timeline and Budget). Proposed timeframes and budget estimates should be realistic and appropriate. • Outline the long-term plan for engagement to attract research funding. Proposals must include a specific and concrete plan for how the project will become sustainable. Elaborate on why the project will be competitive for future external funding. (There is a separate section in the application form in expected outcomes to list the extramural funding which will be targeted). • This section should also address the appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants [including PhD or masters by research students, postdocs, Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCR)[2], and any researchers on Sabbatical Leave] have a valid role and there are adequate resources in the project to enable them to fulfil that role. • 300 word maximum
Impact	• Outline what the participants will gain from the project and how it will contribute to the discipline and field of research. • Explain how the project will establish or strengthen a durable cooperation between the universities and participants.

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[2] Early-Career Researchers are defined as those within 10 years of award of PhD and Mid-Career Researchers are defined as those between 10-15 years of award of PhD.

- Explain how the project will impact beyond the academic sphere (i.e. benefit society, address global challenges, Sustainable Development Goals, etc).
- Explain how the project activities and results will be communicated to different target audiences.
- 300 word maximum

7. Expected Outcomes

Capturing the outcomes of successful projects is vital in helping to measure the overall success and impact of the Ignition Grants. Expected outcomes could include one or more of the following:

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	The research: - will advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of importance - may result in fundamental outcomes - is innovative in concept - will use well established approaches to good effect
Publications	At least one (1) refereed publication in a nationally/internationally recognised scholarly journal
External funding	At least one (1) Category 1-3[3] national/international competitive grant submission or application for grants offered by the funding bodies in Hong Kong, for example, Research Grants Council, Innovation and Technology Commission, Health Bureau, among others. Details of the external funding bodies to which an applicant plans to submit applications must be identified within the application form, and evidence of external funding submissions will be required in the final project report.
Optional	
Training & education	Supervision and mentoring of PhD students/postdoctoral researchers/ECRs
Joint Workshop	Organise at least one (1) joint workshop at either institution. This may be in-person, virtual or hybrid.
Conference	At least one (1) conference presentation. This may be online.

Industry engagement is encouraged, but not expected. If proposals include industry engagement, then details should be provided in the timeline/activities section of the online application.

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[3] Category 1: Australian Competitive Grant Research Income. For example, the ARC, NHMRC, MRFF, etc.
Category 2: Other Public Sector Research Funding. Other Australian Government schemes and business enterprises and State and local governments and partly government-owned or funded bodies.
Category 3: Industry and other Funding for Research. Research grants or contract research with Australian or international industry or non-Australian Government agencies. Funding through donations, bequests, charities and foundations (both Australian and international).

8. Assessment Process

Award selection will be made by a joint committee formed by members of both universities, which reserves final authority over the selection of projects taking into account recommendations from the applicants' Heads of Departments/Units and Faculty Deans/Directors of Institutes, and the availability of funds.

9. Application Submission

9.1.   All applications must be jointly submitted by a Chief Investigator from USyd and a Chief Investigator from CUHK.

9.2.   A copy of the questions included in the online application form (including budget) is available for preview from the Funding Schemes Site at http://sydney.edu.au/award-schemes

9.3.   All applications must be submitted online via the Funding Schemes Site at http://sydney.edu.au/award-schemes.

9.4.   Applications can only be initiated by the Chief Investigator from USyd using their UniKey and password. Chief Investigators from CUHK can then access and edit the applications once invited by USyd Chief Investigators to be a "Collaborator" of the application.

9.5.   All applications require the endorsement by the relevant USyd Head of School, and CUHK Heads of Departments/Units and Faculty Deans/Directors of Institutes. Both Chief Investigators from USyd and CUHK must complete the endorsement forms and have them uploaded to USyd Funding Schemes Site before final submission.
- **USyd:** Completion of an Endorsement Coversheet by the USyd Head of School is required. A pre-filled coversheet will be sent to the USyd Chief Investigator after the completion of the online Ignition Grants application form.
- **CUHK:** An endorsement form to be completed by the CUHK Heads of Departments/Units and Faculty Deans/Directors of Institutes to confirm their intention of renewing the applicants' contract, if applicable, and their support for the application. To download the form, please click here.

9.6.   Only complete submissions will be considered.

9.7.   Late applications will not be considered.

10. Notification of Application Outcomes

Successful applicants will receive a letter of award outlining the process to accept the award including payment. Successful applicants will be required to accept their offer as per below by the due date stated in their letter of award.
- **USyd**: Successful USyd applicants will be required to accept their offer through the USyd Funding Schemes Site.
- **CUHK**: Successful CUHK applicants will be required to complete and submit a Declaration of Acceptance to the Program Coordinator at the Office of Academic Links (oliviakwok@cuhk.edu.hk).

11. Change of Investigator

Applicants should contact the Program Coordinator at each institution. Such changes will need to be approved and documented.

12. Availability of Grants

12.1. The maximum amount that applicants can request for projects is approximately AUD20,000 (AUD10,000 from USyd and HK$60,000 from CUHK).

12.2. For CUHK Chief Investigators, funds not spent by 30 November 2024 must be returned to the University.

12.3. For USyd Chief Investigators, each month, funds matching actual expenditure from the previous month will be transferred into the Chief Investigator's university project account by Corporate Finance. The transfer of funds will cease when the awarded amount is reached or 30 November 2024, whichever comes first. Any expenditure above the awarded amount will need to be cleared to another Faculty/School account (such as consulting or other as appropriate).

13. Extensions

Under exceptional circumstances if there is a need for extension, Chief Investigators should approach their Program Coordinator to discuss their circumstances.

14. Financial and Reporting Obligations

14.1. The funding should only be used for the approved project and in accordance with the proposal and the budget plan. It must not be used for any other purposes and prior approval from both universities is needed for any variation in the budget items. Request for variations from original proposals must be submitted to both universities for approval.

14.2. Awardees must adhere to the purchasing guidelines of the respective universities to which reimbursement is to be sought. Major changes to the expenditure plan will require prior approval.

14.3. Awardees must submit a **final report** using the report pro-forma online through the [Funding Schemes Site](#). The final report must be completed by 28 February 2025 and an **update to the final report** must be submitted before 30 November 2025.

14.4. In consultation with their Finance Manager, the USyd Chief Investigator must complete an acquittal statement and upload this with their final report. An acquittal statement template is provided with the report pro-forma online through the [Funding Schemes Site](#) which is linked to the application. This is not required by CUHK Chief Investigators.

14.5. **USyd**: Failure to submit a completed report will result in all members of the project team being ineligible to submit future funding applications and mention of the Ignition Grant will be removed from their University of Sydney online Academic Profile.

   CUHK: The Chief Investigators will not be considered for future applications for the Ignition Grants if a completed report is not submitted.

14.6. The activation of research funding accounts are not tied to ethics/other approvals being obtained. It is the responsibility of Chief Investigators to ensure that no work requiring approval is commenced until such approvals are in place.

15. Marketing and Communications

Awardees may be contacted by USyd Marketing and Communications and CUHK Office of Academic Links for the purposes of promoting their successful funding application and informing others of their research.

16. Publications

16.1. Any publications (e.g. abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g. public presentations) arising from activities supported by the Ignition Grant should acknowledge assistance received. The standard acknowledgment is "USyd–CUHK Ignition Grants".

16.2. Publications should appear in internationally recognised scholarly journals and should be published within 18 months after the end of the project.

16.3. Copies or notifications should be submitted to the Office of Global and Research Engagement at USyd and the Office of Academic Links at CUHK.

Further Information
For further information please contact the Program Coordinators:

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