

Gifted Education Fund
Application for Funding Support to Provide
Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes for Gifted Students

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Basic information

1. Q: What are Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes?
A: Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes (“OSALPs”) refer to off-school education programmes designed to expose gifted students to high quality and challenging learning experiences in their areas of talent or, where suitable, in a wider range of disciplines or even across disciplines.

2. Q: What are the priority themes for the programmes?
A: Priority consideration will be given to proposed programmes under one or more of the following four themes:
 - (a) STEAM-related Mentorship Programmes
 - (b) Humanities and Social Science Research Programmes
 - (c) Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship Programmes
 - (d) Self-initiated Research Studies

3. Q: What are the objectives of above priority themes?
A: The objectives of the four priority themes are as follows:
 - (a) STEAM-related Mentorship Programmes
 - to equip gifted students with the essential knowledge and skills in STEAM-related fields to facilitate future advanced research studies or pursuit of related career.
 - (b) Humanities and Social Science Research Programmes
 - to engage gifted students in research-based social sciences projects and equip them with the essential knowledge and skills in social sciences research.
 - (c) Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship Programmes
 - to expose gifted students to professional work-related fields.
 - to provide gifted students collaborative learning experiences as a team and to equip them with the knowledge and skills in setting up and running a business.
 - to develop gifted students’ creativity and problem solving skills through challenging contexts.
 - (d) Self-initiated Research Studies
 - to provide personalised learning opportunities to gifted students who will conduct research under mentorship and support in areas of their interest to develop the competence and habit of self-directed learning.

Apart from developing the knowledge and skills of students, the proposed programmes should also nurture their values and attitudes. It would be desirable to include elements of affective education of gifted students in the programmes.

4. Q: Can applicant organisations submit applications beyond the priority themes?
A: The coverage of the present priority themes is sufficiently wide. The applicant organisation should propose programmes that best match the specified priority theme(s). A programme can be cross-disciplinary and cover more than one priority theme.
5. Q: Can an applicant organisation submit an application based on its existing programme that happens to cover the priority theme(s)?
A: Apart from proposing a completely new programme, the applicant organisation can renew/ revamp existing programmes that cover the priority themes and apply for funding support to run the programmes. However, precautions have to be taken to avoid the issue of double subsidy. Relevant history of the programmes has to be clearly mentioned in the application form.

Target beneficiary

6. Q: Are students from private/ international schools eligible for Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes?
A: All students, as at the date of application, studying in secondary day-schools, primary schools (including public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, English Schools Foundation schools, private schools) who are student members of the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education are eligible for Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes.

Students of evening schools, students of private studies, holders of student visa for entry into Hong Kong for studies and holders of Form of Recognizance issued by the Immigration Department are ineligible for the programmes.

7. Q: How are the programmes made known to students and how do they apply for the programmes?
A: The Education Bureau (EDB) will inform local primary and secondary schools about the programmes via circular memorandum (EDBCM). Programme information will be uploaded onto EDB's website¹. Students who are interested in the programmes should enrol through the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted

¹ https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/gifted/ge_fund/gef/programme/current.html

Education.

8. Q: What is the medium of instruction for Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes?
A: The allowable medium of instruction is English or Chinese. The applicant organisations should state clearly in the application form the medium of instruction adopted for the programme material and the class teaching/ discussion respectively. The applicant organisations are reminded to observe the medium of instruction commonly used for primary education and secondary education in Hong Kong when it proposes a programme for gifted students in relevant Key Stage².

Application-related Issues

9. Q: Which types of organisations are eligible to submit applications for funding support to provide off-school advanced learning programmes for gifted students?
A: Organisations eligible to apply for funding support from the Gifted Education Fund to offer the programmes include:
- (a) Post-secondary institutions (including related faculties, departments, centres, etc. or staff with proven support from respective unit of post-secondary institution)
 - (b) Non-government organisations (NGOs)
 - (c) Professional bodies
 - (d) Technology enterprises
10. Q: Does the Gifted Education Fund support applications that involve collaboration among several eligible organisations?
A: An applicant organisation may submit an application on its own OR with other eligible organisation(s) who serve as supporting organisation(s). The involvement of supporting organisation(s) fosters the collaboration among organisations of different backgrounds, enabling the design of learning and teaching activities that cover wide disciplines or the provision of cross-disciplinary learning/ research opportunities which are useful for broadening the perspectives of gifted students.
11. Q: How can I submit an application for funding support?
A: Applications should only be submitted via the Electronic Form Submission System (“EFSS”) of EDB at <<https://eformss.edb.gov.hk/eformss/Login>>. The electronic application form, namely eForm91, can be completed in Chinese or English. Paper forms are no longer accepted. A user guide on the completion of

² Key Stage refers to the 4 stages of schooling from primary to secondary:

- Key Stage 1 (junior primary P1-P3)
- Key Stage 2 (senior primary P4-P6)
- Key Stage 3 (junior secondary S1-S3)
- Key Stage 4 (senior secondary S4-S6)

eForm91 is available on EDB's website³.

12. Q: What is the maximum number of applications an applicant organisation can submit each year?

A: There is no limit on the number of applications to be submitted by each applicant organisation every year.

13. Q: What is the expected duration of a proposed programme?

A: A proposed programme should consist of two periods, namely, preparatory period and delivery period.

The preparatory period lasts for 3 months and usually starts from February. Examples of preparatory work include hiring training personnel, confirming the date, time and venue for different sessions, carrying out publicity for the programme and preparing learning and teaching materials.

The delivery period, which immediately follows the preparatory period, must be between 5 months to 7 months. It usually starts from May.

14. Q: What should applicant organisations take note of when designing a programme?

A: The applicant organisations should have a thorough understanding of the policy and the development of gifted education in Hong Kong in order to design insightful programmes that best meet the needs of gifted students. The proposed programmes should not only focus on the knowledge and skills but also the values education and the affective development of the students.

The programme objectives should be clearly stated and the implementation strategies have to match the set objectives. Being far more demanding than those usually found in ordinary enrichment programmes, the designed learning and teaching activities should be of sufficient challenge to the gifted students. Individualised learning is a special feature of off-school advanced learning programmes and mentorship needs to be available to provide learning support to the students and cater for learner diversity. Besides, appropriate opportunities need to be in place for students to showcase their learning outcomes/ deliverables. To protect the environment, printing booklets to document/ showcase students' work should be avoided.

A detailed programme rundown and a clear budget plan with justifications on each item should be provided in the application form. The applicant organisations

³ https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/gifted/ge_fund/gef/asp.html

should also elaborate on the qualifications and expertise of all members in the training team in the application form.

15. Q: Would collaboration with overseas scholars or professionals be allowed in the applications?

A: To allow flexibility and creativity in the design of the programmes, the applicant organisations may propose to collaborate with overseas scholars/ professionals in their applications. Should the required expertise/ experience be available locally, the applicant organisations are advised to work with local professionals as far as possible. The applicant organisations should provide strong justifications on the genuine need to collaborate with overseas scholars/ professionals for the benefit of the student participants and state clearly the expertise and the roles of overseas scholars/ professionals in the application form for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Gifted Education.

The applicant organisations should also provide a clear breakdown in the budget plan to indicate the cost of overseas collaboration. No more than 50% of the budget should be allocated to overseas organisations/ professionals.

16. Q: What are the criteria for assessing the applications?

A: Applications will be assessed in accordance with, but not limited to, the criteria under three areas: programme needs, programme feasibility and expected programme outcomes. The proposed programme must strive to meet the criteria in all the three areas. A conceptual framework, an implementation plan with realistic timeline and a detailed budget plan with detailed breakdown of expenditure items as well as clear justifications should be provided. More details can be found in the Guide for Applicants on EDB's website⁴.

17. Q: What is the maximum amount of funding support available to each successful application?

A: As the nature, duration, frequency of meetings, etc. of each proposed programme varies, we do not set a ceiling on the amount of funding support for each successful application. The applicant organisations need to provide sufficient evidence in the part of budget plan in the application form to justify the amount of funding support that they apply for. The Gifted Education Fund Secretariat will contact the applicant organisations concerned for clarifications if necessary.

18. Q: How do successful applicant organisations receive the funding support?

A: For successful applications, funding would be paid in installments in accordance with the payment schedule set out in the service agreement to be signed between

⁴ https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/gifted/ge_fund/gef/asp.html

the successful applicant organisation and the Grantor of the Gifted Education Fund. The funding allotted will only cover expenses incurred during the period between the commencement date and the end date of the programme stipulated in the service agreement.

19. Q: How is the salary rate of staff employed for a programme determined?
A: Some programmes may require the employment of short-term or part-time staff to carry out duties specific to the programme and their pay rates are calculated on a time-on-programme basis. The salary should be commensurate with the qualifications and experience of the staff to be appointed. The Advisory Committee on Gifted Education will assess the pay rates for appointment of staff proposed by an applicant organisation in the budget plan. Strong justifications need to be provided for the appointment of staff at higher pay rates.
20. Q: Can programme leader receive any salary or remuneration from the programme?
A: Normally, the applicant organisation shall appoint a programme leader to oversee and lead the programme. No award in the form of cash allowance to this person for whichever capacit(ies) he/ she may carry in the programme is permitted. Should the normal duties of the programme leader be affected because of implementing the programme such as serving as an instructor/ a mentor, instead of awarding cash allowance as remuneration to the programme leader, consideration should be given to redistributing or assigning his/ her duties to other staff members.
21. Q: Is payment of administrative charges to post-secondary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee allowed?
A: For programmes submitted by post-secondary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee, the applicant organisations may include administrative charges to be paid to the post-secondary institution in the budget plan with justifications and breakdown for consideration by the Advisory Committee on Gifted Education.
22. Q: Is the provision of fringe benefits (e.g. Mandatory Provident Fund contribution, medical and dental insurance, gratuity, untaken leave payment, etc.) to the programme staff allowed?
A: All programme personnel, if employed on a full-time basis, should be remunerated on a fixed salary point during the whole programme period. In normal circumstances, salary increment is not allowed. Fringe benefits of staff, e.g. education allowance, medical and dental insurance, etc., should not be included in or charged to the programme. Terms of employment should be specified in accordance with the Employment Ordinance, Employees'

Compensation Ordinance and, where applicable, the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance.

23. Q: Can applicant organisations include the audit fee in the budget?

A: Grantees of programmes with approved grant exceeding \$100,000 are required to submit audited accounts upon programme completion and they could include the audit fees under the category of “General Expenses”. The GE Fund will cover up to \$5,000 of the audit fee for a programme with approved grant of \$1 million or less, and up to \$15,000 for a programme with approved grant exceeding \$1 million.

24. Q: Is there any expenditure that would not be supported by the Gifted Education Fund ?

A: The applicant organisations should determine allowable costs for their programmes according to the general principles as follows:

- (a) The cost is in accordance with the terms and conditions stipulated in the service agreement;
- (b) The cost is incurred within the ambit and the scope of the approved budget;
- (c) The cost is incurred within the programme period;
- (d) The cost is necessarily incurred for the purposes for which the Gifted Education Fund is provided;
- (e) The cost is reasonable and accords with the principles of sound financial management, in particular in terms of value for money and cost-effectiveness; and
- (f) The cost is actually and provably spent. It is adequately documented by accounting records and documents such as invoices, receipts, payroll records, timesheets, etc.

Costs such as expenses for rates, renovation, entertainment and prizes, food, insurance premiums (except for public liability insurance and/or group personal accident insurance in special circumstances with strong justifications), etc. would not be allowed.

Rights and Commitments of a Successful Applicant Organisation

25. Q: Can a successful applicant organisation collect additional fees such as travel fees for visits, handouts and insurance from the student participants?

A: A successful applicant organisation is not allowed to collect additional fees from the student participants. They should carefully plan the programme activities and include all necessary fees in the budget plan when submitting the application form.

26. Q: Is there any minimum enrolment for a programme to proceed?

A: The demand for off-school advanced programmes for gifted students remains high

and small-class teaching is encouraged to cater for learner diversity. There is no minimum enrolment for a programme to proceed at the moment. However, successful applicant organisations are expected to have networks with local primary/ secondary schools and play an active role in promoting the programmes to schools/ parents.

27. Q: What are the commitments of a successful applicant organisation?

A: The successful applicant organisation will be required to sign a service agreement with the Grantor. The service agreement will set out in detail the conditions of the funding support. The successful applicant organisation will be required to play an active role in assuring the quality of the programme. A quality assurance mechanism needs to be included in the application form and the detailed implementation plan.

28. Q: What reports need to be submitted by a successful applicant organisation?

A: The successful applicant organisation is required to submit reports according to the requirements and submission schedule stipulated in the service agreement with the Grantor. General requirements are as follows:

Required reports	Deadline
Progress Report	Within the 7th month after the signing of service agreement
Interim Financial Report	
Final Report	Within three months after the end of the programme
Final Financial Report	
Audited Accounts	

29. Q: Is a successful applicant organisation required to return the unused fund, if any, upon the completion of the programme?

A: Where there are unused funds, the successful applicant organisation is required to return the whole amount to the Gifted Education Fund Secretariat upon the completion of the programme.

In case of any inconsistency or ambiguity between the English version and the Chinese version of this document, the English version shall prevail.

Gifted Education Fund Secretariat
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