Gifted Education Fund
Application for Funding Support to Provide Off-school Advanced Learning Programmes for Gifted Students
Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Priority Themes

1. Q: What is meant by off-school advanced learning programmes?
   A: Off-school advanced learning programmes refer to off-school learning programmes designed to expose gifted students to high quality and challenging learning experiences in their talented areas or, where suitable, in a wider range of disciplines or even across disciplines.

2. Q: Are there any examples of priority themes/areas?
   A: Priority consideration will be given to the applicant organisations with proposals under any of the themes categorised into the following five strands:
   (a) STEM-related Mentorship Programmes
   (b) Humanities and Social Science Research Programmes
   (c) Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship Programmes
   (d) Self-initiated Research Studies
   (e) Challenging Learning Programmes Incorporating Participation in Prestigious International Competitions

3. Q: What are the objectives of the priority themes for this year?
   A: The objectives of the five priority themes are as follows:
   (a) STEM-related Mentorship Programmes
       - To equip gifted students with the essential knowledge and skills in the field of STEM for future advanced research studies or related career.
   (b) Humanities and Social Science Research Programmes
       - To engage gifted students in research-based social sciences projects and equipping them with the essential knowledge and skills in social sciences research.
   (c) Apprenticeship and Entrepreneurship Programmes
       - To provide gifted students with authentic work-placement at large corporates to gain professional knowledge and experiences under the joint efforts of university and business sector.
       - To provide gifted students with collaborative learning experiences as a team as well as equipping them with the knowledge and skills in setting up and running a business.
       - To nurture gifted students’ creativity and problem-solving skills in challenging contexts.
(d) Self-initiated Research Studies
- To provide advanced level personalised learning opportunities for gifted students in areas of their interest so as to nurture self-directed learning habits of gifted students.

(e) Challenging Learning Programmes Incorporating Participation in Prestigious International Competitions
- To provide research-related learning opportunities, e.g. research-based mentorship, for the awardees of prestigious international competitions, such as International Junior Science Olympiad (IJSO), International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO), International Olympiad of Metropolises (IOM) and International Physics Olympiad (IPhO).

4. Q: Can applicant organisations submit applications beyond the priority themes/areas?
   A: Applicant organisations should choose the priority theme that best suits the key focus of their programme proposals when they submit the applications. Applications that (i) cover more than one priority theme/area; and (ii) cut across different priority themes/areas are also welcomed.

5. Q: Can applicant organisations submit applications based on their existing programmes that cover the priority themes/areas?
   A: Apart from proposing new programmes, applications based on existing programmes that cover the priority themes/areas are also eligible for application for funding support.

Target beneficiaries

6. Q: Are students from international schools eligible for joining off-school advanced learning programmes?
   A: Full-time students enrolled in a registered primary or secondary school (including public-sector schools, DSS schools and private schools) are eligible for joining off-school advanced learning programmes funded by the Gifted Education Fund.

7. Q: How are the students selected for joining off-school advanced learning programmes?
   A: The off-school advanced learning programmes funded by the Gifted Education Fund are designed for gifted students who are identified mainly through the established nomination and selection mechanism of student members of the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, including school nomination and self-nomination. Applicant organisations may nominate/identify students by their own nomination and selection mechanism but the mechanism should be clearly stated in the programme proposals. The Vetting Committee would consider the degree of sophistication and reliability of the nomination and selection mechanism adopted by applicant organisations.
Application Arrangement

8. **Q:** Which types of organisations are eligible to submit applications for funding support to provide off-school advanced learning programmes for gifted students?
   **A:** The eligibility requirements for an organisation to apply for funding support under the Gifted Education Fund to offer off-school advanced learning programmes are as follows –
   (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) with relevant experience in gifted education/ talent development
   (c) Professional bodies
   (d) Technology enterprises

9. **Q:** Does the Gifted Education Fund support applications with collaboration among several eligible organisations?
   **A:** Application can be submitted by individual organisation or by joint application (i.e. proposed and undertaken by more than one eligible organisation).
   For a joint programme, there should be a principal applicant organisation and supporting applicant organisation(s). The principal applicant organisation and each supporting applicant organisation should state clearly in the application form their respective roles and responsibilities in the proposed joint programme.

10. **Q:** What languages would be accepted for submission of programme proposals?
    **A:** Applicant organisations can submit programme proposals in Chinese or English.

11. **Q:** What is the maximum number of applications an applicant organisation can submit in each year?
    **A:** There is no limit on the number of applications to be submitted by each applicant organisation each year.

12. **Q:** Is there any ceiling to the duration for a proposed programme to be launched?
    **A:** The proposed programme should be launched for a period of not more than three years.

13. **Q:** What should applicant organisations take note of when setting out the programme idea and design?
    **A:** Applicant organisations should have a thorough understanding of gifted education policy and development of gifted education in Hong Kong in order to draw up insightful programme proposals and elaborate in their proposals on how their programmes can
contribute to talent development in Hong Kong.

When designing the programme proposal, each part of the proposal should be inter-related. For instance, the implementation details of the proposed programme should be designed for attaining the programme objectives effectively and the evaluation strategies adopted should be able to measure the effectiveness of the programme. Detailed schedule and budget should be provided in the implementation plan. Applicant organisations should also elaborate in the programme proposal the expertise of the programme team rather than just quoting any particular experts/scholars so as to demonstrate that the whole team possesses the relevant expertise for conducting the programme.

14. Q: Would collaboration with overseas scholars or professionals be allowed in the applications?
   A: To allow flexibility for the programme that may include unique experiences for gifted student participants, collaboration with overseas scholars or professionals is allowed in the applications. Should the required expertise/experience be available locally, applicant organisations are advised to consider working with local professionals as far as possible and the applicant organisations should provide strong justifications on the genuine need to collaborate with overseas organisations instead of local organisations. The expertise of overseas scholars or professionals should be clearly stated in the programme proposals for consideration. Applicant organisations should provide clear breakdown of budget in the programme proposals to show that it would be more cost-effective for overseas collaboration than local collaboration. No more than 50% of budget should be allocated to overseas organisations/professionals.

15. Q: What are the criteria for assessing the programme proposals?
   A: Programme proposals will be assessed in accordance with, but not limited to, the criteria under three areas, viz. programme needs, programme feasibility and expected programme outcomes. The programme proposals must strive to meet the criteria in all the three areas. Conceptual framework, implementation plan with realistic timeline and detailed budget of expenditure items with justifications should be provided. Other details can be found in the Guide to Applicants uploaded to the website of the Gifted Education Fund and the Advisory Committee on Gifted Education (https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/GEFund).

16. Q: What is the maximum amount of funding support to each successful application?
   A: As we consider the content of each programme proposal individually, we do not set a
ceiling for the amount of funding support for each successful application. Yet the amount of funding to be approved will depend on a host of factors including the funding under the GE Fund being available for the respective cohort of programmes. During vetting of programme proposals, negotiation with applicant organisations may be conducted on the funding support to provide off-school advanced learning programmes for gifted students.

17. Q: What are the funding arrangements for the successful applications?
A: Funding for programmes must be exclusively used for the programme and incurred within the programme period. Thus, it would not cover multiple cohorts of gifted student participants in one single application. The applicant organisation should submit a detailed budget with expenditure, income and justifications. Unless under special circumstances, funding of the Gifted Education Fund will only cover expenses incurred during the period between the commencement date and the end date of the programme as set out in the service agreement signed with the Education Bureau (EDB). Should the application be approved, the funding will be paid into the designated account by phases in accordance with the payment schedule set out in the service agreement to be signed with the EDB.

18. Q: Does the funding support programmes involving study trips outside Hong Kong?
A: The Gifted Education Fund supports programmes involving educational visits and exchange programmes outside Hong Kong to broaden students’ horizons and learning experiences. Applicant organisations can include cross-boundary learning and exchange activities in accordance with the priority themes/areas and different learning needs of gifted student participants. The programme proposals should elaborate on the planning of the programme, with cross-boundary learning activities forming an integral part of and complementing other elements, in order to ensure that the cross-boundary learning activities under planning are specific to the abilities and needs of the gifted students.

19. Q: Does the programme allow employment of project staff at a rate higher than the minimum pay rates applicable to similar personnel?
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-project basis. Salary should be commensurate with qualifications and experience of the candidate to be appointed. The GE Fund Secretariat will conduct an assessment on the pay rates for appointment of staff proposed by the applicant organisations. Strong justifications have to be provided for the appointment of staff at higher pay rates.
20. Q: Does the programme support administrative charges from tertiary institutes funded by the University Grants Committee?
A: For programmes submitted by tertiary institutes funded by the University Grants Committee that incur administrative charges, the institute may include the item in the budget together with details, justifications and breakdown.

21. Q: Does the programme support fringe benefits (such as MPF contribution, medical and dental insurance, gratuity, untaken leave payment, etc.) of programme staff?
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 granted. Fringe benefits of staff, e.g. education allowance, medical insurance, housing allowance, 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.

22. Q: Can applicant organisation include the cost of audit fee in the budget?
A: Applicant organisation is required to submit financial statement upon completion of the programme and the cost could be included in the budget.

23. Q: Is there any unallowable items that would not be supported by the Gifted Education Fund?
A: Applicant organisation should determine allowable costs for the programme according to 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.

Successful Applicant Organisations’ Commitments
24. Q: What are the commitments of an applicant organisation if the application is successful?
A: Applicant organisation will be required to sign a service agreement with the EDB. The
service agreement will set out in detail the conditions of the funding support. For joint programmes, the principal applicant organisations shall sign the service agreement as the grantee of the programme. Applicant organisation will be required to play an active role in programme monitoring and self-evaluation. Schedule of the submission of reports and financial summary is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme duration</th>
<th>Submission of progress report</th>
<th>Submission of evaluation report and financial statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Upon the end of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 2 years</td>
<td>• 1st progress report: 6 months after the commencement of the programme; and • 2nd progress report: 1 year after the commencement of the programme</td>
<td>Upon the end of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 2 years to 3 years</td>
<td>• 1st progress report: 6 months after the commencement of the programme; and • Annual progress report: to be submitted yearly</td>
<td>Upon the end of the programme</td>
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25. Q: Does successful applicant organisation need to return unused fund, if any, upon the completion of the programme?
   A: Successful applicant organisation of the Gifted Education Fund shall return the unused fund, if any, upon completion of the programme.

Gifted Education Fund Secretariat
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