



THEME: **How to successfully secure Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS) 2020/2021**

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LECTURE AGENDA

1. **Why study for a PhD in Hong Kong?**
2. **How can applicants secure the HKPF?**
3. **Selection Criteria**
4. **Other remarks**
5. **Questions & Answers Session**

WHY STUDY FOR A PhD IN HONG KONG (HK)?

- 1) we have a vibrant community of Nigerian scholars in HK, who will never hesitate to make your stay in HK enjoyable and stress-free
- 2) The Cultural Diversity: HK is a melting pot for all cultures and there's no room for racism in HK
- 3) HK is a popular tourist destination (Tian Tan Buhda, Disneyland, Victoria Peak, Temple Street Night Market, etc). HK made over US\$26 billion dollars from tourism in 2016

- 4) All programs are taught in English at HK universities
- 5) Very efficient transport system (transport fares are cheap)
- 6) Huge financial benefits/gain for PhD scholars and Postdocs compared to other nations
- 7) Easy access to China
- 8) Rich variety of food options at affordable prices
- 9) High ranking of HK universities in the world. HK has one of the top-ranked engineering schools in Asia and the world - HKUST
- 10) Low tuition and accommodation fees of HK universities compared to western universities.
- 11) The amazing ease of cashless transactions (i.e. HK was the first city in the world to introduce the use of the Octopus card for transactions).
- 12) Incredibly high level of technology
- 13) Asia's world city - HK is the third largest financial/business centre of the world after London and New York
- 14) Research Hub - HK spends so much money on research annually. Probably Asia's most popular research hub. There's always an ongoing research heavily funded by the government
- 15) If you love living in a city with mansions and skyscrapers, then HK should be your number one choice. As of now, HK is the city with the highest number of skyscrapers in the world (about 353). No longer New York City. HK is an amazing concrete jungle

HOW CAN APPLICANTS SECURE THE HKPF?

Before I address this proper, there are some things you need to know. Generally, an application for PhD to any HK university is first considered for **University Studentship** (i.e. the university scholarship) and later **nominated** by

a **Supervisor, Department** and **University** for the **HKPFS**. Thus, to win the HKPFS, you must have secured the University Studentship.

There are 22 universities in HK but only **8** are participating in the fellowship scheme. The University Grants Council (UGC) of HK then selects only **250** awardees out of the pool of nominees from the eight participating universities in HK.

As a rule of thumb, if you plan applying for the HKPFS, **get a supervisor as early as possible**. Would be really great if you can get a supervisor before the application window opens September 1st every year. I got a supervisor last year July. Please visit this link for further information: <https://cerg1.ugc.edu.hk/hkpfs/apply.html>

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE HKPFS

- ◆ Academic Excellence
- ◆ Research ability and potential
- ◆ Communication and interpersonal skills
- ◆ Leadership abilities

The four criteria add up to 120 points. Academic excellence attracts as much as 60 points, while the remaining 60 points are distributed across the other three criteria. Please note that, as part of academic excellence rating, GRE, TOEFL and IELTS are not compulsory. You should only submit them if your scores are quite high. Further, three factors that also play a role in the evaluation of your application are:

- ◆ Supervisor's strong Support and Nomination
- ◆ Ranking of your University (could be national, continental or world ranking depending on the nature of the competition)
- ◆ Your Class Rank (i.e. position in your graduating class)

OTHER REMARKS

Remember to always keep in touch with your supervisor for possible updates on your application. This is because not all applications will be nominated for the HKPFS; supervisors only nominate their best applicants.

The University Studentship also pays higher than PhD scholarships in other countries. In fact, it's more than enough. You won't need an off-campus job to get more funds. So the HKPFS is what most scholars here in HK call 'icing on the cake,' because it pays much higher and comes with other benefits.


Note that the HKPFS is the highest award the HK government can grant any scholar (citizen or non-citizen). Also, it is expected for a Master's holder to have at least one publication these days. Study duration is 3 years for Masters holders, but 4 years for Bachelor's holders (with First Class Honours).

Moreover, there's a part of the application requirement called Vision Statement. You can call it SOP. It's highly important you give it your best shot. The UGC also checks for plagiarism in your overall application. Any detected form of plagiarism leads to automatic disqualification.

Studentship offers are released January to February every year. Then the UGC notifies the final HKPFS awardees by email in March. Results are published on their website first week of April.

A final advice: HK universities like to see strong evidence to support all awards you state in your application. For example, to say in your application that you graduated top of your class is considered invalid. You need to get evidence of class rank to support such claim. Similarly, get evidence for all your academic awards/prizes/honours as well as for leadership roles and service to community. For Nigerian applicants, one good evidence of service to community is your NYSC certificate. This is proof of contribution or service to society.

GENERIC QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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- Q. *One of the frustrating stages is getting a potential Supervisor. Sometimes one sends as many as 50 emails without a reply. What hints can you please share with us in this respect?*
- A. Yeah, you're right. I've been there. My advice is start sending mails two to three months before September. Then most supervisors are yet to receive mails from applicants. Some professors in my university received over 1000 emails in October last year.
- Q. *When does application for these universities normally open during the year?*
- A. September 1st. Same time with the HKPFS.
- Q. *Is it permissible for married students to come with their spouse?*
- A. Yeah, 100% possible! There are many Nigerians here living with their spouses.
- Q. *Can someone with a Second Class Upper apply directly for the PhD program?*
- A. Yeah, but with Masters.
- Q. *After getting a supervisor, what are the things to do to increase one chances?*
- A. Prepare a proposal and all required documents. Your supervisor will definitely guide you.
- Q. *If I get your point correctly, a BSc degree holder can actually apply for a direct PhD program in HK. What then can make such application to stand out besides the degree and write-ups that will be done? Any additional requirements?*
- A. Any Bachelor's holder with First Class Honours is qualified to apply straight for the HKPFS. No need for Master's degree. The other documents s/he can add could be GRE, TOEFL or IELTS scores or any publications. But these are not compulsory. Only optional!

- Q. *Thanks Scholar for the lecture. For the HKPFS, is it compulsory to secure two supervisors for the two different schools before making the application? What is the chance of getting the HKPFS with only one supervisor?*
- A. Yeah, you can get two or more supervisors but I think it's good you settle for one in each university. Make your selection based on academic profiles.
- Q. *If someone was given admission but couldn't get the HKPFS, will s/he get the Postgraduate Studentship Scholarship automatically?*
- A. Thanks for mentioning this. Yeah, it's possible! Every HK university can grant other scholarships to students who didn't secure the HKPFS.
- Q. *I think we can only choose two universities out of the 8 for admission? So I am asking about having one in a university and getting none in the other one sir? Thanks*
- A. You can only choose two for the HKPFS but can submit normal applications to other universities too. I know of a guy who applied to three last years.
- Q. *Does the application to these HK schools require Application Fee?*
- A. Yes. At most HKD250.
- Q. *What area of funding does the Studentship Offer cover?*
- A. Studentship covers everything. With the studentship, you can make month.
- Q. *Do they (other HK schools) apart from the 8 UGC have Post Graduate Studentship Scholarship too?*
- A. I doubt it, because the other 14 consist majorly of private universities.
- Q. *HKPFS takes 250 yearly, how many does a Department take averagely for studentship offer?*
- A. Studentship slots varies according to departmental and supervisors' funding. Some can take 15, 10, 5, 4 or 2. It all depends on funding.
- Q. *Should I restrict my search for potential supervisors to Professors only, as against Associate Professors, Assistant Professors or Doctors?*
- A. Anyone can be your supervisor, so long they possess a PhD.