

**Ministry of Education**

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL  
(SSRC)  
GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP  
(GRF)**

Administrative Guidelines and Policies  
for Universities and Awardees

1 July 2023

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Graduate Research Fellowship (GRF) is a national scheme that aims to facilitate the engagement of outstanding early-career Singaporean social science and humanities researchers who have been accepted for their doctoral or postdoctoral training at leading overseas research or academic institutions.
- 1.2. The SSRC GRF aims to forge strong professional networks with promising early-career Singaporean social science and humanities researchers. This broadened network of Singaporean researchers based locally and abroad facilitates a rich exchange of ideas between local and international scholars that strengthens Singapore's research capabilities.
- 1.3. The SSRC GRF also aims to assist in the development of promising overseas-based early-career researchers with the provision of a small research grant and an opportunity to be mentored by an experienced researcher from one of the local Autonomous Universities (AUs). This will broaden the potential pipeline of Singaporean researchers who may eventually take up appointments within the local research ecosystem.
- 1.4. There are two categories of award:
  - (a) Up to SGD 10,000 per award for doctoral students; and
  - (b) Up to SGD 20,000 per award for postdoctoral fellows.

## **2. Terms**

### Eligibility Criteria

- 2.1. Applicants must fulfil the following eligibility criteria:
  - (a) Singapore citizens;
  - (b) Outstanding undergraduate academic records (at least a bachelor's degree with second upper honours or equivalent); and
  - (c) Applied or accepted for doctoral studies or postdoctoral training (or equivalent<sup>1</sup>) at a leading overseas academic or research institution.

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants must provide supporting documents to show that their home university does not offer postdoctoral fellow positions, and their current position could be considered equivalent to that of a postdoctoral fellow.

- 2.2. Applicants should not be recipients of other scholarships from the Singapore Government.

Terms of the SSRC GRF

- 2.3. The terms of the SSRC GRF are as follows:
- (a) Tenable for a period of two years;
  - (b) Tenable for research in any social science and humanities discipline, although research on issues relevant to the local context is encouraged;
  - (c) The award may be used for travel or other research-related expenses;
  - (d) Awardees will be assigned a mentor who is an experienced researcher at one of the local AUs based on their proposed area of research, who can provide access to valuable academic and career guidance;
  - (e) Awardees will be required to return to Singapore at least once during the tenure of award to participate in engagement activities (e.g. research seminars) within the AU and with SSRC members; and
  - (f) Awardees must comply with reporting requirements stipulated by the host AU.
- 2.4. The SSRC GRF is bond-free, and host AUs are not obliged to hire GRF awardees as faculty members beyond the GRF tenure.
- 2.5. Prospective SSRC GRF awardees may only accept one GRF offer from one host AU at any point in time.
- 2.6. SSRC GRF recipients may apply for a second award after the term of their first award has been completed. However, an individual will be limited to a maximum of 2 awards in total throughout their career (regardless of category). All applications for the award will compete on an equal basis.
- 2.7. SSRC GRF will be administered by the AUs, with the SSRC as the final approving authority.

- 2.8. SSRC GRF recipients will inform MOE and the host AU should they receive other scholarships from the Singapore Government post-award for review. MOE will assess on a case-by-case basis if the SSRC GRF may run concurrently with the other scholarship.
- 2.9. SSRC GRF applicants in the last year of their PhD programme may be offered conditional awards should they have an offer for a suitable postdoctoral position which they would assume upon graduation. Holders of conditional awards will inform MOE and the AU should there be any changes to the pre-agreed postdoctoral training plans, for review.
- 2.10. SSRC GRF applicants who have applied but yet to secure a PhD programme or postdoctoral position may be offered in-principle awards by the AUs. The fellowship will only be confirmed when applicants have secured a place in the pre-agreed PhD programme or postdoctoral position. Applicants should update the AUs on their application status and provide supporting documentation by the acceptance deadline.
- 2.11. Appeals for unsuccessful applications will not be considered.

### **3. Monitoring and Disbursement of Funds**

- 3.1. Upon conveyance of the approved awardees, MOE will disburse the approved award amount to the AUs upfront in one lump sum.
- 3.2. In the case of in-principle awards, if candidates are not offered a place in the pre-agreed choice of institute by the acceptance deadline, the final amount awarded to the AU will exclude the conditional offer, and AUs may not change the awardee. AUs should inform MOE on the status of in-principle awardees with supporting documentation in a timely manner.
- 3.3. Actual expenditure for SSRC GRF awards should be administered on the basis of each individual awardee. Once the list of awardees who have accepted the GRF has been finalised, AUs should provide to MOE the confirmed list of awards and approved funding quantum for each awardee. Should AUs be co-funding the award, the co-funding split between MOE and the AU

should be clearly specified. The award amount and co-funding amount is fixed and cannot be changed after this.

- 3.4. In the case of co-funded awards, MOE funds may be depleted first to support actual expenditure incurred by individual SSRC GRF awardees. However, AUs should not aggregate the expenditure across individual awards and use the total savings across all awards to reduce institution's co-funding quantum below the original amounts set out for each individual.
- 3.5. The host AUs should:
  - (a) Implement good financial accounting practices and account for the use of the research funds; and
  - (b) Establish a mechanism for the management of SSRC GRF funded projects which includes requests for project budget variation.
- 3.6. The host AUs shall account for the utilisation of the funds through an annual audited expenditure statement to be submitted to MOE within two months from the end of the Financial Year (by 31 May). Upon the completion of the award at the end of 2 years, AUs shall return to MOE any unutilised Funds after the submission of the audited expenditure statement. MOE may appoint an external auditor to audit the AUs for compliance in the use of MOE funds provided under the SSRC GRF. Roll over of unused funds to support new awards is not allowed.
- 3.7. AUs are required to ensure that there are adequate internal financial controls and processes as well as adequate cost control measures to ensure that resources are utilised prudently, and cost inefficiencies are minimised. For cost items not specified in the list of non-fundable items, OREs should assess the reasonableness of the request, and ensure that the proposed costs are necessary and relevant for the research.
- 3.8. Ownership of all assets purchased under the grant will be vested with the host AU, which will have the flexibility to repurpose or dispose of the asset in accordance with its internal asset management policy after the term of the grant has been completed. In the event that the awardee is unable to return the assets to the host AU when they visit Singapore, the AU may charge shipping costs to the grant. Prudence should be exercised in making such transactions. Should shipping costs be too high,

and exceed the original price of the asset, AUs are advised to explore acquiring the asset by other means or disposing of the asset.

3.9. In the event of an early termination of a GRF award, AUs should inform MOE earliest possible, and the following conditions will apply:

- (a) Change of awardee is not applicable for the SSRC GRF awards.
- (b) Upon termination of the award, the AUs shall take all necessary actions to minimise further expenditure on the research up to termination date.
- (c) AUs will have to return to MOE all monies that have not been expended under the award.
- (d) MOE may require the AUs to return all or some of the funding that has already been expended in the event of termination due to misconduct, subject to the circumstances of each case.

#### **4. Performance Management**

4.1. AUs are to submit on a Financial Year (FY) basis, an annual report and a completion report to MOE for each batch of awardees within two (2) months from the end of the FY (by 31 May). The report should be submitted through the Offices of Research (ORE) or its equivalent and endorsed by the Director of Research (DOR), covering details on the research expenditure and output on an aggregated level. Individual reports from the awardees should be included in the Annex of the report to MOE.

4.2. AUs are to maintain a record of GRF alumni and their current employment, significant publications, and recent engagements in locally-relevant research activities and provide these to MOE by 31 May each year.

## **5. Acknowledgement Guidelines**

5.1. All institutions should attribute their awards/grants to the Social Science Research Council (Singapore) and the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

5.2. Where possible, the acknowledgement statement should follow:

“This research / project is supported by the Social Science Research Council (Singapore) and administered by the Ministry of Education, Singapore, under its <name of funding programme> (XX Award <ref no>, if applicable).

If there is more than one funding source, the names of each source of funding are to be placed in order of the funding value.

5.3. Where applicable, the following disclaimer must be included in all published materials arising from the Research:

“Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the views of the Social Science Research Council (Singapore) and the Ministry of Education, Singapore.”

## **6. Training & Education Programmes**

6.1. Wherever necessary, the SSRC or MOE may request the Awardees and/or the research team to participate in education-related programmes such as:

- (a) Presenting their research work in MOE schools and institutions of higher learning or public outreach activities; and
- (b) Supporting MOE’s and the SSRC’s efforts in developing the social science and humanities research ecosystem in Singapore.

## **7. Compliance with Administrative Guidelines**

7.1. In the event of non-compliance with the administrative guidelines, MOE reserves the right to:

- (a) withhold or withdraw the funding;

- (b) carry out any action as MOE deems appropriate; and
- (c) disqualify the awardee from subsequent SSRC GRF awards.

## **8. Miscellaneous**

- 8.1. MOE reserves the right to change, including without limitation, modify, delete or replace the information and materials set out in this document unilaterally. MOE shall notify the Host Institutions in writing, enclosing the revised terms and conditions, accordingly.
- 8.2. As and when directed by MOE, the Institutions will allow an auditor appointed by MOE to carry out an audit of its financial and related processes/procedures pertaining to the utilisation of SSRC GRF grants.