

Research Grants Council Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector

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Chair of the Assessment Panel
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Agenda

- 1) How an application is assessed**
- 2) Overview of 2025/26 round project selection results of FDS and IIDS**
- 3) Panel's observations/comments on 2025/26 round**
 - Faculty Development Scheme (FDS)
 - Inter-Institutional Development Scheme (IIDS)
 - Institutional Development Scheme (IDS)
 - Research Infrastructure Grant (R); and
 - Collaborative Research Grant (C)
- 4) Refinement arrangements to IDS**
- 5) Non-compliance cases**

Assessment Process



Assignment of Readers

Subject Convenor



Nomination of External Reviewers (ERs)
(Not applicable to IDS(R))

First Reader



Consideration of ERs' Assessments and Rating

First / Second / Third Reader



Interview for IDS(C) & IDS(R)
Discussion of Proposals and Finalisation of Rating

Assessment Panel



Endorsement of Panel's Recommendation

Steering Committee



Funding Approval

The RGC

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Major Assessment Criteria for FDS

- 1. Clarity of objectives and research agenda**
- 2. Research design and methodology**
- 3. Feasibility**
- 4. Innovativeness**
- 5. Research impact**

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Overview of 2025/26 round project selection results of FDS

Subject	No. of applications		% change	No. of funded projects		% change	Success rate	
	2025/26	2024/25		2025/26	2024/25		2025/26	2024/25
Humanities & Social Sciences (H)	163	151	+7.9%	35	41	-14.6%	21.5%	27.2%
Business Studies (B)	82	78	+5.1%	13	11	+18.2%	15.9%	14.1%
Biology & Medicine (M)	55	42	+31.0%	14	15	-6.7%	25.5%	35.7%
Engineering (E)	102	72	+41.7%	46	23	+100.0%	45.1%	31.9%
Physical Sciences (P)	14	13	+7.7%	7	6	+16.7%	50.0%	46.2%
Total	416	356	+16.9%	115	96	+19.8%	27.6%	27.0%

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Overview of 2025/26 round project selection results of IIDS

Subject	No. of applications		% change	No. of funded projects		% change	Success rate	
	2025/26	2024/25		2025/26	2024/25		2025/26	2024/25
Humanities & Social Sciences (H)	19	14	+35.7%	8	6	+33.3%	42.1%	42.9%
Business Studies (B)	6	7	-14.3%	3	2	+50.0%	50.0%	28.6%
Biology & Medicine (M)	3	0	N.A.	1	0	N.A.	33.3%	N.A.
Engineering (E)	8	3	+166.7%	4	3	+33.3%	50.0%	100.0%
Physical Sciences (P)	1	1	0%	1	0	N.A.	100.0%	0.0%
Total	37	25	+48.0%	17	11	+54.5%	45.9%	44.0%

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2025/26 Round

Panel's Observations on FDS – H & B Subjects

Humanities & Social Sciences

- ✓ Well-argued research significance with improvement in impact statements and research objectives
- ✗ Overly ambitious and weak in methodological robustness for some projects

Business Studies

- ✓ Addressed timely topical issues and well-articulated with sound methodology and experimental design
- ✗ Limited incremental contributions to academic literature in some proposals

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2025/26 Round

Panel's Observations on FDS – Sciences Subjects

Biology & Medicine

- ✓ Good quality proposals with innovative ideas and focus on pressing topics
- ✗ Weak methodologies undermined feasibility and outcomes for some proposals

Engineering

- ✓ Consistently high-quality proposals led to higher success rate
- ✓ Encouraging quality of Green Pls' proposals as a reflection of the calibre of young researchers

Physical Sciences

- ✓ Funded projects demonstrated high quality
- ✗ Number of applications remained low, likely due to small department size. Encourage institutions to submit more proposals

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Tips for Success

Research Objectives

- Identify key research questions that matter
- Clarify operational constructs for precision
- Ensure terminology is clearly defined to the audience

Research Impact

- Set realistic and meaningful impact goals
- Highlight incremental contributions to society and the academia

Budget Planning

- Justify the budget clearly, explaining why resources are needed, don't just list items
- Avoid over-budgeting
- Align budget justification with overall proposal objectives

Others

- Include a risk mitigation strategy for potential challenges
- Fully comply with the RGC guidelines (e.g. page limit and disclosure of related research work)

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Major Assessment Criteria for IIDS

- 1. Clarity of objectives**
- 2. Robustness of research related activities**
- 3. Feasibility**
- 4. Impact**

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2025/26 Round

Panel's Observations on IIDS

- ✓ High quality proposals addressed important and timely topics
- ✓ Leveraged institutions' capacities to extend resources and impacts
- ✓ Cost-effective budget optimising resource utilization
- ✗ Weak articulation on how the events would enhance research capacity for some proposals
- ✗ Encourage more diverse formats for exchange of ideas other than keynote speeches, paper presentations and workshop

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Major Assessment Criteria for IDS(R) and IDS(C)

IDS(R)

1. Long term impact and sustainability
2. Expected deliverable and likelihood of building up research capacity
3. Feasibility and implementation strategy

IDS(C)

1. Academic merit
2. Long term goal and potential to develop into area of strength
3. Opportunities for effective synergy through collaboration with research groups and institutions
4. Research impact

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2025/26 Round Panel's Observations on IDS

Scheme	Observations
IDS(R)	• Inadequacy in research methodology and need up-to-date theoretical framework • Would like to see clear elaboration on novelty and uniqueness of projects • Appear to be over-relying on technology for some proposals: need to see solid arguments for implementation • Encourage PIs to give more thought to academic contributions, enhancement of research capacity and impact
IDS(C)	• There are proposals with broad scopes and wide-ranging objectives challenging to achieve • Would like to see contributions to theory development • Some proposals have only limited academic value in generating new knowledge or insights • Encourage coherent alignment among research hypotheses, methods, expected outcomes and impact

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Refinement Arrangements to IDS(R): 2026/27

- **Refined objective:** To build up as well as further enhance the research capacity of SF institutions in their strategic areas
- Each institution is allowed to submit **TWO applications**:
 - (1) New / Re-submission application for **new research centre**; and
 - (2) Application for **enhancing existing research centre** of strategic importance. The centre should have been completed for three years or more prior to application deadline (i.e. 2 March 2026).
- For (2), the applications should –
 - introduce new programmes / research work that build upon the capabilities of existing research centre
 - align the new programmes / research work with the institution's strategic direction

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Refinement Arrangements to IDS(C): 2026/27

- **Refined objective:** To encourage and support collaborative research involving two or more SF institution(s) as well as with UGC-funded universities
- SF institutions may engage scholars from UGC-funded universities as Co-PIs in their projects with a view to leveraging their expertise and research experience
- Research funding is ring-fenced for the SF sector. The project grant will not be transferred to the UGC sector

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Non-compliance Cases

- ♦ **Exceeding page limit**
✗ Don't exceed page limits for Project Objective, Pathways to Impact Statement, Research Project Statement and Project Descriptions
- ♦ **Incomplete grant records** or **non-disclosure of similar/ related research work** in applications
- ♦ **Misconduct Case on self-plagiarism**
 - proposal's content substantially the same as the PhD dissertation or own published paper, without proper citations or acknowledgements

Potential consequences

- ♦ **Disqualification** of submitted application
- ♦ Serious breaches will lead to **disciplinary action** and **grant penalty** (e.g. debarment for all UGC / RGC grants)



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Q & A

Thank You !