

GBA STARTUP POSTDOC PROGRAMME APPLICATION HANDBOOK

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IMPORTANT NOTE

All contents in this handbook are subject to change without prior notice. Please contact the Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship Office (KTEO) for the latest updates before submitting your application.

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GBA STARTUP POSTDOC PROGRAMME 2023
BRIEF INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Piloted in 2019, GBA Startup Postdoc Programme @Hong Kong/Shenzhen (“the Programme”) aims to promote research-based entrepreneurship and nurture recent doctoral graduates to become “Technopreneurs” (Technologist and Entrepreneur), extending research impact to society.

The Programme is open to recent doctorate graduates from around the world who have strong passion and vision to commercialise research technologies through startup venturing in the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

By leveraging support from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (“PolyU”) and its partners’ resources and network in GBA, the structured programme provides competitive remuneration package and benefits, dual mentorship by academia and industrialists, entrepreneurship training, and preferential IP licensing terms, options to work in Shenzhen or Hong Kong, all these elements come together to support the postdocs to translate research outcomes into real-world impact through startups.

2. Objectives

- To commercialize impactful research output for creating impact
- To promote and nurture research-based entrepreneurship
- To transform recent doctoral graduates into technopreneurs

3. Highlights of the Programme

- Dual mentorship - Academic and Industrial
- Option to work in Shenzhen or Hong Kong
- Translational research supported by university facilities
- Preferential IP licensing: equity options in lieu of partial license fee
- Route for academic faculty members’ participation in startups

4. Work Location

Subject to related terms and conditions, Postdocs under the Programme will be recruited on a full-time basis as either

- a) a postdoctoral fellow employed by PolyU with the primary work location on Campus in Hong Kong (**Hong Kong Scheme**); or
- b) a postdoctoral researcher registered with the Postdoc station of Shenzhen Virtual University Park (深圳虛擬大學園博士後工作站) with the primary work location at the PolyU Shenzhen Research Institute (SZRI 香港理工大學深圳研究院) (**Shenzhen Scheme**).

5. Benefits & Support

A GBA Startup Postdoc will receive a competitive support package as well as other resources to jump-start his/her start-up, including:

- Annual remuneration package up to RMB¥312,000¹ (Shenzhen) or HK\$348,000² (Hong Kong)
- Full statutory benefits (e.g. mandatory provident fund and insurance, etc.)
- Maximum RMB¥2,000 or HK\$2,300 per year for outreach activities³
- Free workspace (InnoHub at PolyU/InnoHub at Shenzhen)⁴
- Entrepreneurship training
- Support for working visa application for overseas candidates

Plus

- Dual mentorship – academic and industrial
- Comprehensive entrepreneurship development support by KTEO, PolyU
- Investor and Industry network
- Pipeline to funding schemes or incubation programmes of PolyU or other incubators

Other funding opportunities⁵ from the Government and University, if applicable, include:

Entrepreneurship support opportunities under PolyVentures 2025:

- PolyVenture Micro Fund - maximum HK\$120,000 funding, and further Incubation support up to HK\$1.3 million
- PolyU Angel Fund - Matching grant up to HK\$1.5 million
- PolyU Entrepreneurship Investment Fund - Equity Investment up to HK\$4 million

Government grants and subsidies:

- 廣東省海外青年博士後引進計劃 - Annual subsidy up to RMB¥120,000
- 深圳市政府科研經費 - Research grant up to RMB¥300,000⁶

¹ Annual Salary is RMB132,000 plus living subsidy RMB180,000 (深圳市政府生活補貼)

² Annual Salary is HK\$348,000

³ Annual maximum RMB¥2,000/HK\$2,300 for outreach activities, e.g. conference, seminar, public talks or any other activities relevant to the project/business which can be claimed for reimbursement, subject to pre-approval by KTEO.

⁴ Management fee may apply

⁵ Relevant conditions and eligibility must be fulfilled, and application are required. The funding is subject to its availability and approval from the funding bodies.

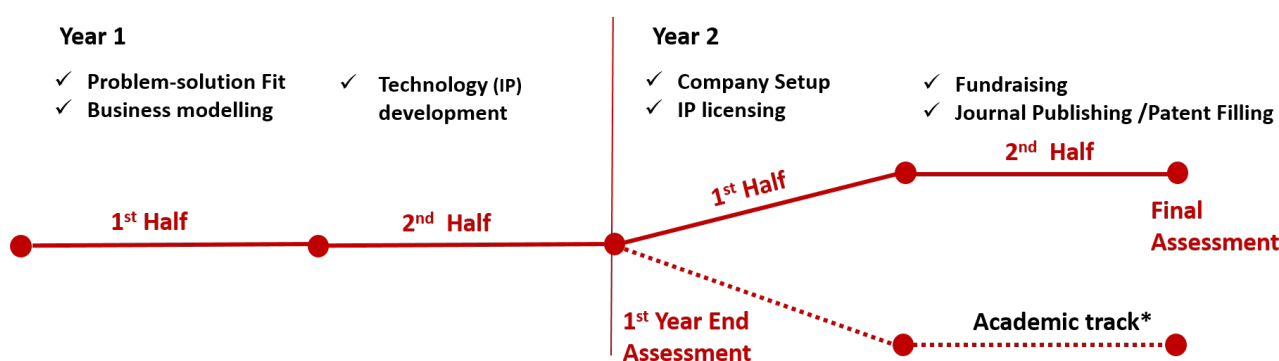
⁶ The grant is for postdoc who has completed the programme and will continue to work in Shenzhen for 3 years.

6. Programme Structure

The normal period of the programme is 2 years counting from the commencement date. The commencement date is the starting day in the national postdoc registry system in the Shenzhen Scheme, whereas the starting day in the employment contract in the Hong Kong Scheme.

In the first year, postdocs should carry on their translational research, and develop a business model and action plan to transform the research into real application. After Year 1, postdocs who fulfil the assessment requirements and decide to continue the programme should remain focus on business development and commercialization in the second year.

The postdocs may opt for the academic track after Year 1 if research commercialization is not feasible. The academic supervisor shall secure funding support for the postdocs who wish to follow the academic track.



Year 1 Milestones

Time	Milestones
1 st Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an Initial project plan
1 st – 6 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for PolyU Micro Fund and completed Lean Launchpad training Attain prize at the designated Innovation and entrepreneurship competitions by KTEO or funding offer
6 th – 12 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve satisfactory progress in research and product/ service development File a patent (if applicable) Receive satisfactory performance at 1st year-end assessment (Hog Kong Scheme)/ Mid-term Assessment (Shenzhen Scheme)

Year 2 Milestones

Time	Milestones
13 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a second-year project plan
13 th – 18 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register and incorporate a company Sign IP licensing agreement
18 th – 24 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve satisfactory progress in research and product/service development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise funds for the start-up acquires a license for the technology ▪ Receive satisfactory performance at Final assessment
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Note: The Startup Postdocs in the Shenzhen programme are also subject to the project proposal, mid-term review, final review and other requirements as stipulated by the regulations and guidelines of the Postdoc Station under the Shenzhen Virtual University Park.

7. Programme Assessment Criteria

1st Year-End Assessment

	Task to be completed (Mandatory)	Requirement
1	Apply PolyU Micro Fund (including Lean Launchpad training)	Applied Micro Fund and completed Lean Launchpad training
2	a) Participant in designated Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition or b) Apply for research/entrepreneurship funding	a) Prize awarded or b) Funding offer attained
3	1 st Year-end Assessment	Achieved satisfactory progress

If candidate is not able to meet any of the above three requirements, PolyU reserves the right to discontinue the support for the candidate. The candidate can opt for the academic track in the 2nd year, subject to the availability of funding.

Final Assessment

		Distinction	Merit	Pass
1	Commercialisation Income OR Investment & Valuation (RMB/HKD)	≥RMB 1 million(or)	RMB 500,000~1 million(or)	RMB 100,000~500,000(or)
		≥ RMB 2 million cash investment, post-investment valuation ≥RMB 20 million	≥ RMB 1 million cash investment, post-investment valuation ≥ RMB 10 million	≥ RMB 500,000 cash investment, post-investment valuation ≥ RMB 5 million
2	Competition Award OR Funding/Grant Support	First prize awarded	Second prize awarded	Third prize or below awarded
		(Or) Funding offer attained		
3	Entrepreneurial practice	Company registered and IP licensed (if applicable), and satisfactory progress in research and development according to the second-year project plan		
<i>If item (1) is not satisfied, either one of the following must be fulfilled:</i>				
4	Journal publishing OR Patent	One journal published in JCR – Q1	One journal published in JCR - Q2	Two journals published in SCI/SSCI/CSSCI
		File one patent (entered the trial stage)		

8. Mentorship

During the Programme, the Startup Postdocs will be guided and supported by:

Academic Supervisor

- A recognised doctoral supervisor from PolyU
- Co-supervision may be required, if the supervisor is an assistant/associate professor or the same supervisor in PhD (for Shenzhen Programme)

The academic supervisor would guide and support the Postdocs to conduct translational research and product/ service development.

Industry Mentor

- A professional with rich managerial and industrial experience in the relevant fields or industries (to be assigned after selection)

The industry mentor would provide guidance, advice and best practice to the Postdoc on developing and implementing the business plan.

9. Intellectual Property Rights & Share Holding Arrangement

- The Intellectual Property (IP) generated within the Programme period belongs to PolyU/SZRI
- No infringement of a third party's IP shall be declared by the Startup Postdoc
- Licensing agreement shall be signed with PolyU/SZRI when the Startup Postdoc establishes a start-up and starts commercialisation (royalty fee shall apply)
- PolyU will own 10% equity in the form of stock option of the start-up established by the Startup Postdoc

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

SECTION A: Application Eligibility

1. Application Eligibility

- Candidates attained a doctoral degree for no more than five years for Hong Kong Scheme/ no more than three years for Shenzhen Scheme, or will attain their degrees within six months^{7,8}
- Excellent applied research capabilities and determination to turn research outcomes into products/services
- Strong passion and vision to commercialise the research technology through start-up (those with past or current entrepreneurial experience are preferred)
- Good English reading and writing skills

Extra requirements for Shenzhen Scheme

- Aged 35 or below⁹
- Only PhD graduates are likely to be accepted
- Good command of written and spoken Chinese is a definite advantage

2. Academic Supervisor

- The Applicant shall have identified at least one recognised doctoral supervisor from PolyU to be his/her academic supervisor(s) and have their consent.
- Co-supervision may be required, if the supervisor is an assistant/associate professor or the same supervisor in PhD (for Shenzhen Programme)

Applicants can visit www.polyu.edu.hk/education/faculties-schools-departments/ to search for suitable academic supervisors.

SECTION B: Application Submission

1. Submission of Application

The Applicant shall complete an online application at GBA Startup Postdoc Programme [web page](#) and upload the following documents on or before the application deadline:

- I. A 15-slide PPT in English (please refer to PPT Guidelines in Section B.3);
- II. CV;
- III. A copy of identity document;
- IV. A copy of academic & professional qualification certificates;
- V. Academic supervisor nomination proof;
- VI. Declaration of "Use of PolyU Knowledge/Innovations/Technologies" duly signed/endorsed by PolyU academic staff, if applicable. (The form is available on the GBA Startup Postdoc Programme [web page](#) under the section "Download Area".)

⁷ Upon the application submission date.

⁸ Exceptions may apply for outstanding applicants of the Hong Kong Scheme subject to the University's common practice and the assessment panel's decision.

⁹ Upon the registration in Shenzhen government's Postdoc System

2. Briefing Session and Application Deadline

Briefing Sessions (online)	Application Deadline
15 February 2023 (Wed) 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm & 2 March 2023 (Thu) 1:00 pm-2:00 pm	17 March 2023 (Fri) 1:00 pm

3. PPT Guidelines (No more than 15 slides)

In the slides, the Applicant shall cover briefly the following:

- A. The Problem and the Market:
 - The problem you would like to solve
 - Why is this problem important and difficult to solve?
 - Are there any other companies working on the same or similar problems?
- B. Your Solution and the Research Technology:
 - The product/service you will create with your technology to address this problem
 - What are your target market and customer segment?
 - What are your competitive advantages versus the existing solutions?
- C. Your Commercialisation Plan:
 - How will you commercialise the technology and generate revenue?
 - What is the current status and your timeline to develop your product/service?
 - Any societal impact beyond economic return?
- D. Your Personal Statement:
 - A brief introduction/highlight of yourself
 - Why do you want to apply for GBA Startup Postdoc Programme?

SECTION C: Application Assessment Procedure

1. Assessment Process

- 1.1. All applications are free of charge and will be processed in strict confidence. The Applicant must meet the eligibility conditions stipulated in Section A for the application to be further processed.
- 1.2. After the application deadline, all applications will go through an eligibility screening process conducted by KTEO. Wherever necessary, Applicants may be required to submit supplementary supporting documents by the date specified by KTEO.
- 1.3. Subject to the number of applications received and the available quota for the Programme, a Semi-final Assessment will be conducted when necessary to shortlist the top Applications for consideration by the Final Assessment Panel.

- 1.4. One-to-one consultation and pitch training will be carried out before the Final Assessment. At the meetup with the Applicant and the academic supervisor, KTEO will conduct the due diligence and provide pitch advice on the presentation by the Applicant.
- 1.5. The Final Assessment Panel comprising 3~5 members will assess the shortlisted Applicants with a 7-minute presentation delivered by each Applicant and recommend applications to be accepted by the Programme subject to other eligibility requirements and further engagement/employment agreements.

2. Assessment Schedule

Briefing Sessions (Online)	15 February 2023 (Wed) 5:00 pm-6:00 pm 2 March 2023 (Thu) 1:00 pm-2:00 pm
Application Deadline	17 March 2023 (Fri) 1:00 pm
One-to-one Pitch Training	Late March to Mid-April 2023
Grand Finale Presentation	May 2023

3. Application Assessment Criteria

1. Research Technology Impact & Market Potential	25%
2. Technology Readiness / Feasibility	15%
3. Commercialisation Plan	15%
4. Academic & Research Capability	15%
5. Business / Commercial Acumen	15%
6. Coachability / Open-mindedness	15%

SECTION D: Others

1. Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship Office (KTEO) is the administrative unit (the “Unit”) of the GBA Startup Postdoc Programme (the “Programme”). It is responsible for all application, screening, shortlisting, assessment, awarding and follow-up processes.
2. Online applications must be completed on or before the application deadline. No application submitted after the deadline will be entertained.
3. Assessment Panels (the "Panels") will be designated to conduct the assessments in different phases. The decisions from the Panels shall be final and no appeal will be entertained. No communication will be entered into between the applicants and the Unit or the Panel members in relation to the decisions
4. All Startup Postdocs must read and comply with the terms and conditions listed in this Handbook and the agreements to be signed with the PolyU/PolyU Shenzhen Research Institute if shortlisted for the Programme.

5. Where the Applicant is asked to submit any information, content or material to PolyU (“Content”), the Applicant must ensure that all Content is up-to-date, accurate, legal, honest, decent, truthful and complies with all applicable laws, regulations, standards and codes of practice. The Applicant must ensure that all Content submitted to PolyU does not infringe copyright, design, privacy, publicity, data protection, trademark or any other rights of any third party, and is not obscene, abusive, threatening, libellous or defamatory of any person.
6. The Applicant shall have sole responsibility for the Content which submitted to PolyU and the Applicant shall indemnify and shall keep PolyU fully and effectively indemnified on demand from and against all actions, claims, losses, liability, proceedings, damages, costs, expenses, loss of business, loss of profits, business interruption and other pecuniary or consequential loss (including legal costs and expenses) suffered or incurred by PolyU and arising directly or indirectly from the Content submitted by the Applicant to PolyU being in breach of these terms and conditions. Where PolyU has relied upon, published or used the Content then the losses to be indemnified by the Applicant shall include all sums claimed from PolyU by third parties having relied upon the Content and all sums expended by PolyU on the Applicant in connection with the Programme (including but not limited to any financial benefits and sponsorship that the Applicant has received).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. Can current doctoral students apply for the Programme?**
Yes, a doctoral student who will attain a doctoral degree within six months is welcome to apply, as long as they fulfil the eligibility requirement.
- 2. Can non-Chinese applicants apply for the Programme?**
Yes, applicants from overseas are welcome to apply for the Programme, as long as they fulfil the eligibility requirement.
- 3. Can non-PolyU graduates/students apply for the Programme?**
Yes, graduates/students from recognised tertiary institutions from all countries or regions can apply for the Programme, as long as they fulfil the eligibility requirement.
- 4. Do I need to select the academic supervisor by myself upon application?**
Yes, you are required to liaise with at least one PolyU full time academic staff and have his/her consent to be your academic supervisor before submitting your application. The academic supervisor must be a full-time recognised doctoral supervisor from PolyU.
- 5. If I have already participated in the “Micro Fund” and “PolyU Lean Launchpad Programme”, can I still apply for the Programme?**
If you used the same research technology in the participation, you can skip the “Micro Fund” and “PolyU Lean Launchpad Programme” during the Programme.
- 6. I have no entrepreneurial experience. Can I apply for the Programme?**
Yes, as long as you have a strong passion and vision to commercialise the research technology through start-up in GBA, you are welcome to apply for the Programme.
- 7. Can I choose to change from the Hong Kong Scheme to the Shenzhen Scheme?**
No. You cannot change between the two schemes as they involve different engagement/employment agreements and funding sources.
- 8. Who will provide the working space, equipment, and lab access?**
Like the other postdoc fellowship scheme, your academic supervisor shall provide you with working space, equipment, and lab access. If you are in the Shenzhen Programme, SZRI will provide such facilities if available.
- 9. Who will be the owner of any intellectual properties (IP) generated?**
The Intellectual Property (IP) generated during the Programme belongs to PolyU/SZRI.
- 10. When should I obtain the authorisation of using a third-party IP?**
If you are using a third-party IP for the application, you should obtain written consent from the inventor/ owner upon application.

11. Can I choose a patented technology for commercialisation?

Yes, you are required to provide the related information, including patent number, name and country, when submitting your application.

12. Are there any restrictions on the composition of shareholders of the start-up company?

No, there is no restrictions on the composition and share allocation of the shareholders of the start-up company. However, it is expected the Startup Postdoc will be the major shareholder, and also PolyU has the right to own 10% equity of the company in the form of stock option.

13. Can the academic supervisor participate in the start-up as a shareholder?

The academic supervisor can participate in the start-up as a shareholder and take up some non-executive role such as Advisor, subject to the proper declaration of interests following the pertaining regulations of the University.

14. When will the University take the 10% equity of the start-up?

The University will take the 10% equity in the form of the stock option through an IP licensing agreement and an option agreement. Only when the start-up's valuation reaches the agreed threshold, the University will opt to exercise the option and become a shareholder of the start-up.