

TRANSLATIONAL STARTUP POSTDOC PROGRAMME 2024 APPLICATION HANDBOOK

Enquiry:

Email: gba.startuppostdoc@polyu.edu.hk
Tel: (852) 3400 2735/ 2768
Website: www.polyu-startuppostdoc.hk



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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A. Introduction

The **Translational Startup Postdoc Programme** (“the Programme”) aims to foster research-based entrepreneurship and empower recent doctoral graduates to become “Technopreneurs”- individuals who combine technological expertise with entrepreneurial skills to commercialise research output and create impact on society.

The Programme is open to recent doctoral graduates from across the global who possess a strong passion and vision for commercialising research technologies through startup ventures.

Backed by the extensive resources and network of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (“PolyU”) and [Mainland Translational Research Institutes \(“MTRIs”\)](#) of PolyU, the structured programme provides a competitive remuneration package and support to Postdoc candidates (“Postdocs”) in exploring diverse application scenarios and translating their research outcomes into real-world impact.

(1) Objectives

- **Transform Research into Impact:** Convert innovative research into real-world applications that benefit society and industry.
- **Foster Technopreneurship:** Promote research-based entrepreneurship among recent doctoral graduates, equipping them with the skills needed to succeed as Technopreneurs.

(2) Highlights of the Programme

- **Global Talent Recruitment:** Attracting top doctoral graduates worldwide
- **Dual Mentorship:** Academic and industrial expertise to support the Postdocs
- **Translational Research Support:** Facilitated by the resources of the University and its Mainland Translational Research Institutes

(3) Benefits & Support

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

1. Annual remuneration package up to HK\$348,000¹
2. Research Funding for prototyping and testing (a maximum of HK\$50,000 per year)
3. Support for traveling and participation in outreach activities² (including passage, meals, accommodation, local transportation, and registration fee)³

¹ Annual Salary is HK\$348,000. Postdocs are responsible for their employee’s mandatory provident fund, and fulfilling their tax obligations in accordance with the relevant local tax laws and regulations.

² Outreach activities includes conference, seminar, public talks or any other activities relevant to the research/startup business development, subject to pre-approval by KTEO, and approval by academic supervisor

³ If the Postdoc will travel to work at MTRI, no subsistence allowance will be provided from the central funding, and the Postdoc concerned should obtain prior approval from HoU and academic supervisor via email. The Postdoc is not allowed to stay in the Mainland for more than 183 days in any 12-month rolling period (which includes both personal trips and duty visits). Otherwise, the Postdoc is responsible for any personal tax obligations that may arise.



4. Free workspace at InnoHub (PolyU or Shenzhen)⁴ and Mainland Translational Research Institutes

Plus

- Dual mentorship – academic and industrial
- Comprehensive entrepreneurship development support provided by KTEO, PolyU
- Connection to 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:

- PolyVenture Micro Fund - maximum HK\$120,000 funding, and further HKSTP 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 through co-investment model

B. Eligibility & Requirements

To apply for the Translational Startup Postdoc Programme (“the Programme”), applicant must meet the following criteria and submit a project proposal that fulfills the specified requirements listed below.

I. Eligibility

- **Potential Academic Supervisor:** Candidate shall identify at least one full-time academic staff member at PolyU (research assistant professor or assistant/associate/ professor and above) to be his/her academic supervisor(s) and have their written consent.

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

- **Doctoral Degree Attainment:** Upon the application submission date, candidates attained a doctoral degree for no more than five years. Alternatively, candidates who will attain their doctoral degrees within next six months are also eligible.
- **Determination to Commercialise Research Outcomes:** Candidates should demonstrate a strong determination and commitment to translating the research outcomes into practical applications through startup ventures.

⁴ Management fee may apply.

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



- **Entrepreneurial Passion and Experience:** Candidates should possess ambition to lead the business as CEO or COO⁶. Preference will be given to candidates with past or current entrepreneurial experience, indicating their familiarity with the challenges and opportunities of running a startup.
- **Applied Research Capabilities:** Candidates should showcase excellent applied research capabilities, demonstrating their ability to conduct impactful research in their respective fields with track record.

Notes:

According to the Guidebook for Entry for Employment as Professionals in Hong Kong issued by the Immigration Department of HKSAR, the General Employment Policy does not apply to nationals of Afghanistan, Cuba, Laos, Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), Nepal and Vietnam. As such, candidates whose nationality falls into any of the aforesaid areas may be rejected in their applications for work visas in Hong Kong.

II. Project Proposal's Requirements

- **Research Focus Areas:** To guarantee that the research and technology developed by Postdocs possess practical application potential and effectively bridge the gap between lab technologies, industry needs, and mass market opportunities, the project proposal submitted by the Postdocs should align with the key research focus areas specified by PolyU MTRIs and aim to address global challenges. Details about the research focus area please visit the websites (www.polyu-startuppostdoc.hk and www.polyu.edu.hk/mtri/)
- **Technology Readiness Level:** Candidates should submit a comprehensive proposal that includes innovation at Technology Readiness Level* 3 or above, meaning it has been completed laboratory tests and providing explicit evidence of the feasibility and viability of their proposed innovation or technology. Details about the Technology Readiness Level is in Appendix 1.

C. Programme Structure

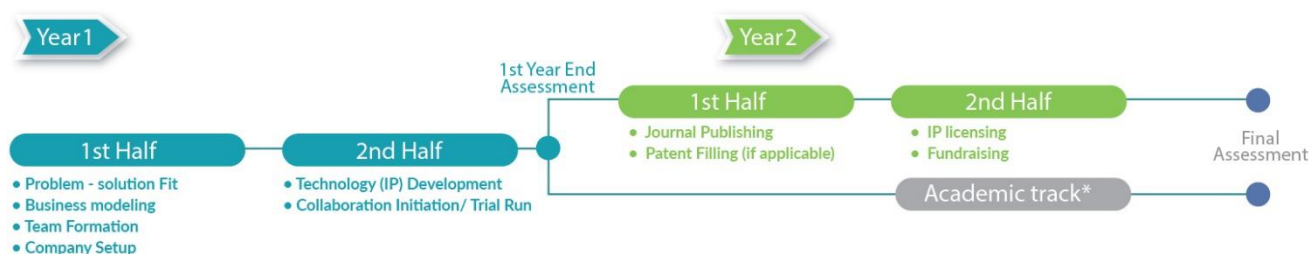
The normal period of the programme is 2 years counting from the commencement date. The initial appointment is for 12 months, with an extension of an additional 12 months, subject to the result of the performance review at the first-year end.

During the first year, Postdocs will concentrate on translational research, with a specific focus on developing a business model and action plan to transform their research output into viable applications. This involves identifying potential trial opportunities in the market or business partnerships that can support the commercialisation of their innovations.

⁶The Postdoc is permitted to assume a full-time executive role in the startup which they establish to commercialise the outcomes developed under the Programme.



In the second year, Postdocs will shift their focus towards business development and commercialisation. This entails implementing the strategies outlined in the business model and action plan developed during the first year. They will work towards establishing and nurturing partnerships, securing funding and investment, refining their product or service offerings and so on.



*Postdocs may opt for the academic track after Year 1 if research commercialisation is not feasible. The Postdocs who opt for the academic track shall seek their academic supervisor who has secured funding to support their future academic research endeavours.

D. Programme Monitoring and Assessment

Throughout the programme period, quarterly regular review meetings will be scheduled between KTEO, Postdoc, their academic supervisor(s) and industry mentor. These meetings aim to review the progress of the Postdocs' work in accordance with their project plan.

KTEO will approach the Postdocs at any time within the programme to discuss, monitor, and evaluate their progress and performance. The postdoc must achieve the milestones listed below in their 1st and 2nd year-end assessment.

Year 1 Major Milestones

Time	Milestones
1 st Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit the first-year project plan with milestones.
1 st – 6 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apply for PolyU Micro Fund and complete Lean Launchpad Training. ▪ Register and incorporate a company in Hong Kong (optional). ▪ 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. ▪ Finalize a trial/ business partnership with supporting documentation as a proof. ▪ Register and incorporate a company in a city with MTRIs. ▪ Receive satisfactory performance at the 1st year-end assessment⁷.

⁷ The postdoc is required to submit a report and present the progress to the panel consisting of their academic supervisor(s), industry mentors and representative(s) of KTEO. The panel will evaluate the performance and progress by considering the submitted project plan and the listed milestones in Part D.



Year 2 Major Milestones

Time	Milestones
13 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit a second-year project plan with milestones
13 th – 18 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ File a patent (if applicable) ▪ Sign an Option Agreement with PolyU⁸. ▪ Sign an IP licensing agreement with PolyU/MTRIs⁹. ▪ Attain prize at the designated Innovation and Entrepreneurship competitions by KTEO or funding offer.
18 th – 24 th Month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve satisfactory progress in research and product/service development. ▪ Fundraise for the start-up/Acquire adoption of the technology. ▪ Receive satisfactory performance at 2nd year-end assessment.

If Postdocs are unable to meet any of the specified requirements or violate the employment ordinance of PolyU, PolyU retains the right to terminate their employment, or not renew the contract without providing advance notice. The Postdoc can opt for the academic track in the 2nd year, subject to the availability of funding and an appropriate academic supervisor.

E. Mentorship

During the Programme, the Startup Postdocs will be guided and supported by at least one academic supervisor and one industry mentor:

Academic Supervisor

- A full-time academic staff member ¹⁰ at PolyU (research assistant professor or assistant/associate/ professor and above) are eligible to serve as Academic Supervisor.
- The academic supervisor will 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 the Postdocs guidance, advice, and best practices on developing and implementing the business plan.

⁸ PolyU will take stock option of the start-up established by the Startup Postdoc. A deed outlining the detailed terms must be signed by the Postdoc to agree to this arrangement before proceeding with their appointment

⁹ Licensing agreement shall be signed with PolyU or/and MTRI when the Startup Postdoctoral Fellow establishes a start-up and starts commercialisation (Licensing fee shall apply, including but not limited to upfront and royalty fee)

¹⁰ In the event of the early departure of the lead academic supervisor from the project or PolyU, the Postdoc will be reassigned to the department of the co-academic supervisor. If the case, there is no co-supervisor available, the original host department may designate another eligible academic supervisor for the Postdoc to continue the programme. Alternatively, the Postdoc can also propose another eligible academic supervisor from the original host department, subject to final approval by the department/school or the relevant research committee. However, if no suitable replacement academic supervisor can be assigned, the appointment of the Postdoc will be terminated at the sole discretion of PolyU.



F. Intellectual Property Rights & Shareholding Arrangement

- The Intellectual Property (IP) generated within the Programme period is owned by PolyU or co-owned by PolyU and MTRI, governed by the Policy on Ownership of Intellectual Property and Regulations on the Management of Intellectual Property of PolyU.
- The products and services developed through this Programme for commercialisation must not infringe any third party's IP rights, as declared by the Startup Postdoc.
- Licensing agreement shall be signed with PolyU and/or MTRI when the Startup Postdoc establishes a start-up and utilizes the IP generated through the Programme (licensing fee shall apply, including but not limited to upfront and royalty fee)
- PolyU will take stock option of the start-up established by the Startup Postdoc in which PolyU's contribution to the programme will be used to convert into equity of the startup. Further details of this stock option will be provided prior to the commencement of the programme and the Postdoc is expected to enter into an agreement with PolyU in relation to the stock option at the commencement of the programme.



APPLICATION GUIDELINES



G: Application Procedure

1. Submission of Application

The Applicant shall complete an [online application](#) and upload the following documents on or before the application deadline:

- I. A 15-slide PPT in English about the research/ project (please refer to PPT Guidelines in Section G.3);
- II. CV of the applicant;
- 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 Translational Startup Postdoc Programme [web page](#) under the section "Download Area".);
- VII. A copy of reference letters (optional)

2. Briefing Session and Application Deadline

Briefing Sessions	Application Deadline
9 October 2024 (Wed) 1:00pm – 2:00pm & 21 October 2024 (Mon) 5:00pm – 6:00pm	31 October 2024 (Thu) 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:
 - What problem you would like to solve and its quantified impact?
 - 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:
 - What is the product/service you will create with your technology to address this problem?
 - What is your target market and customer segment?
 - What are your competitive advantages versus the existing solutions?
- C. Your Commercialisation Plan:
 - What is your business model and how to generate revenue?
 - What is the current status and your timeline to develop your product/service?
 - Any industry partners?
 - Any societal impact beyond economic return?
- D. Your Personal Statement:
 - A brief introduction/highlight of yourself
 - Why do you want to apply for Translational Startup Postdoc Programme?



H: 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 B 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 will be carried out before the Final Assessment. KTEO will conduct due diligence with the applicant and the academic supervisor.
- 1.5. The Final Assessment Panel comprising 3 to 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.
- 1.6. The final decision on the employment appointment is subject to approval by the hosting department/school and HRO of PolyU.

2. Assessment Schedule

Briefing Sessions	9 October 2024 (Wed), 1:00pm – 2:00pm 21 October 2024 (Mon), 5:00pm – 6:00pm
Application Deadline	31 October 2024 (Thu), 1:00 pm
One-to-one Consultation	Mid-November 2024
Final Assessment	Early December 2024

3. Application Assessment Criteria

Assessment Item	Weightings
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%

Note: Detailed criteria are in Appendix 2.



I: Others

1. Knowledge Transfer and Entrepreneurship Office (KTEO) is the administrative unit (the “Unit”) of the Translational Startup Postdoc Programme (the “Programme”). It is responsible for all applications, 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 accepted.
3. Assessment Panels (the "Panels") will be designated to conduct the assessments in different phases. The decisions made by the Panels will be final and no appeal will be entertained. Please note that no communication will be permitted 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 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, 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 ventures, you are welcome to apply for the Programme.

7. 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.

8. Who will be the owner of any intellectual properties (IP) generated?

The Intellectual Property (IP) generated during the Programme belongs to PolyU or co-owned by PolyU/MTRIs.

9. 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.

10. 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.

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

No, there is no restriction on the composition and share allocation of the shareholders of the start-up company. However, it is expected the Startup Postdoc will be the majority shareholder, and also PolyU will take stock option of the start-up established by the Startup Postdoc.

12. Can we apply as a team?

While having a strong team is important, it's important to clarify that this programme is designed to support individual applicants.

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 equity of the start-up?

The University will take the equity in the form of the stock option through an option agreement. Only when the start-up triggers the event of conversion, the University will convert the stock option to equity.

15. Can I modify the project topic after being admitted to the programme?

Changes in project topic will only be allowed and approved on an exceptional basis, supported by sufficiently strong reasons. Postdoc should seek approval from KTEO.



Appendix 1. Technology Readiness Level

TRL for engineering or science related products

TRL 0:	Idea. Unproven concept, no testing has been performed.
TRL 1:	Basic research. Principles postulated and observed but no experimental proof available.
TRL 2:	Technology formulation. Concept and application have been formulated.
TRL 3:	Applied research. First laboratory tests completed; proof of concept.
TRL 4:	Small scale prototype built in a laboratory environment ("ugly" prototype).
TRL 5:	Large scale prototype tested in intended environment.
TRL 6:	Prototype system tested in intended environment close to expected performance.
TRL 7:	Demonstration system operating in operational environment at pre-commercial scale.
TRL 8:	First of a kind commercial system. Manufacturing issues solved.
TRL 9:	Full commercial application, technology available for consumers.

TRL for medical countermeasure products (Drugs or Biologics)

TRL 1:	Review of Scientific Knowledge Base
TRL 2:	Development of Hypotheses and Experimental Designs
TRL 3:	Target/Candidate Identification and Characterization of Preliminary Candidate(s)
TRL 4:	Candidate Optimization and Non-GLP In Vivo Demonstration of Activity and Efficacy
TRL 5:	Advanced Characterization of Candidate and Initiation of GMP Process Development
TRL 6:	GMP Pilot Lot Production, IND Submission, and Phase 1 Clinical Trial(s)
TRL 7:	Scale-up, Initiation of GMP Process Validation, and Phase 2 Clinical Trial(s)
TRL 8:	Completion of GMP Validation and Consistency Lot Manufacturing, Pivotal Animal Efficacy Studies or Clinical Trials, and FDA Approval or Licensure
TRL 9:	Post-Licensure and Post-Approval Activities



Appendix 2: Detailed Assessment Criteria

Judging Criteria (weight %)	Key Qualities
Research Technology Impact & Market Potential (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant benefits to society/industry. ▪ Impactful changes to industry practices or ways of living. ▪ Large market demand ▪ High growth potential ▪ Applicable in multiple industries
Technology Readiness / Feasibility (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technology Readiness Level (TRL) above Level 3. ▪ Likelihood of technology being productized within two years ▪ Highly competitive products/services developed with the technology
Commercialisation Plan (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good logical flow ▪ Identification of key risks and issues ▪ Appropriate strategies in place ▪ Realistic revenue forecast
Academic & Research Capability (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demonstration of relevant and rich knowledge or technical skills in the proposed industry. ▪ Awards received or a good track record in research
Business / Commercial Acumen (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding of key business concepts and market trends and dynamics ▪ Strong business sense ▪ Passion for commercialising the research technology ▪ Strong entrepreneurship spirit ▪ Experience in running a start-up/business, participating in entrepreneurship competitions, or lessons learned
Coachability / Open-mindedness (15%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Willingness to accept different points of view ▪ Eagerness to learn and explore new things

