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Press Release

## Recognising Research Excellence and Innovation HKU Leads in RGC Funding Schemes

July 25, 2023



*Professor Benjamin John Cowling and Professor Shuang Zhang will each lead a project under the Strategic Topics Grant Scheme*

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) has achieved outstanding results in the latest funding exercises by the Research Grants Council (RGC).

HKU has secured the highest number of approved projects and the largest share of funding in both the General Research Fund (GRF) and Early Career Scheme (ECS), and has received awards under the Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme (HSSPFS), Research Fellow Scheme (RFS), Senior Research Fellow Scheme (SRFS), Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS), and Strategic Topics Grant (STG).

Of the six inaugural projects funded under the Strategic Topics Grant, HKU researchers lead two projects and participate in another two. The scheme was launched in August 2022 with an aim to address the city's pressing challenges and capitalise on the opportunities presented by the National 14th Five-Year Plan.

Professor Benjamin John Cowling, Chair of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health at HKUMed, spearheads the "Improving Pandemic Preparedness by Reflecting on Experiences



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in the COVID-19 Pandemic from Different Perspectives" project. Professor Cowling's team seeks to identify efficient approaches to mitigate the socio-economic-mental health impact of future pandemics while at the same time controlling the threat posed to public health by infections, with aim to identify common principles and best practices that can be integrated into pandemic planning to guide public policy decisions in future pandemics. The project received HK\$ 27.053M in funding. (Professor Cowling's bio and more about the project)

Professor Shuang Zhang, Chair of Physics in the Department of Physics at the Faculty of Science, and Chair of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the Faculty of Engineering, is leader of the "Photonic Integrated Platforms Based on Topological Physics" project. The topology of a structure characterises discrete properties, which are inherently immune to flaws, are robust to environmental factors. By combining recent advances in topological and integrated photonics, the project will create dynamic and programmable photonic circuits with advanced functionalities. The project secured HK\$10M in grant support. (Professor Zhang's bio and more about the project)

Three HKU academics were awarded under the Research Fellow Scheme (RFS) and Senior Research Fellow Scheme (SRFS) for their distinguished research achievements and significant contributions to the higher education sector. Professor Xuechen Li in the Department of Chemistry was awarded Senior Research Fellow. Professor Judy Wai Ping Yam, in the Department of Pathology at HKUMed and Dr Joseph Michalski in the Department of Earth Sciences, were awarded Research Fellows.

Dr John D. Wong in the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences has been awarded a funding of HKD 470,000 under the Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship Scheme.

In the General Research Fund Scheme, HKU has achieved a success rate of 37%, with 244 out of the 655 submitted proposals receiving funding. HKU ranks first in three panels: Biology & Medicine, Humanities & Social Sciences, and Physical Sciences, and obtained 25% (\$244M) of the total awarded amount of \$979M.

HKU's young researchers have excelled in the Early Career Scheme, securing support for 40 projects with a total awarded amount of \$32M, representing a 38% rise in awards. The University's percentage share of funding in the ECS is 23%.

In the Theme-based Research Scheme, HKU researchers have achieved remarkable results, led two projects and participated in eight of the nine funded projects.

"These outstanding results not only demonstrate the dedication and expertise of our faculty members, but also reaffirm HKU's commitment to fostering a culture of excellence in research and innovation. As we move forward, HKU will continue to support and celebrate our researchers, while striving to maintain our leading position in advancing knowledge for the betterment of society," said Professor Max Shen, Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).



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More details on HKU's funding results can be found at:

<https://www.rss.hku.hk/funding/funding-results>.

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