

**Ministry of Education**

**THE SOCIAL SCIENCE AND  
HUMANITIES RESEARCH  
THEMATIC GRANT**

Administrative Guidelines  
for Host Institutions and Principal Investigators

May 2026

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Social Science and Humanities Research Thematic Grant (SSHR-TG) aims to encourage high-quality and impactful social science and humanities research in areas of strategic relevance to Singapore. It supports social science and humanities research projects with bearing on key societal and economic issues affecting Singapore and the region. It aims to catalyse collaborations among existing research performers in Singapore, and encourage the effective use and adoption of innovative and inter-disciplinary methodologies, techniques and approaches. It also aims to support pathways to impact, including the test-bedding of ideas arising from research.
- 1.2. The SSHR-TG funds social science and humanities research projects on a competitive basis across eligible Singapore-based institutions.
- 1.3. There are three types of SSHR-TG available:
  - (a) **Type A (S\$100,000 to S\$1.5 million for up to 3 years per project).** This aims to support smaller-scale investigator-led research in areas of strategic relevance.
  - (b) **Type B (>S\$1.5 million to S\$5 million over 3 to 5 years per project).**
  - (c) **Type C (>S\$5 million to S\$10 million over 3 to 5 years per project).**

Both Type B and Type C aims to support research programmes that pursue more ambitious, inter-disciplinary research on issues of cross-cutting interest.

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## 2. Application and Approval of Project Grant

### Application

- 2.1. PIs and co-PIs must hold a primary/joint appointment(s)<sup>1</sup> in the eligible Host Institution(s) and/or Partner Institution(s) at the time of the application, as well as during the entire project duration<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.2 The SSHR-TG allows for joint submission from eligible Host Institutions, subject to the eligibility of the applicants.
- 2.3 Organisations that are eligible to apply for and receive the SSHR-TG may work in partnership or collaboration with any other organisation locally or overseas, subject to the conditions of the SSHR-TG.
- 2.4 Unless expressly allowed by MOE, the funds or any part thereof shall not be channelled to fund research and development activities overseas. Expenditure on overseas fieldwork must be specifically provided for in the research proposal and approved as part of the grant.
- 2.5 The grant cycle for the SSHR-TG will begin in May, unless otherwise communicated by MOE. **Eligible applicants should refer to the latest SSHR-TG Request for Proposal (RFP) document for details on the grant call.**
- 2.6 Researchers are not allowed to submit the same proposal to different grants concurrently, i.e. parallel submissions are not allowed. Applicants should decide which grant to apply for based on the nature of their proposal and the objectives of the grant. Researchers are encouraged to apply for the SSHR-TG if their proposal has strong relevance to the themes supported by the

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<sup>1</sup> There should be a minimum time commitment of 9 months, per calendar year, in these institutions.

<sup>2</sup> PIs and Co-PIs who are awarded grants must continue to meet this criterion throughout the project period. Should such PIs/Co-PIs be on no pay leave (or not serve duties at the institution) for more than 3 months in a Calendar Year during the project, they will no longer be eligible for the grant for that Calendar Year. **If there are plans for the PI to leave the Host Institution during the project, the application should include a 1-page note, endorsed by the Director of Research, outlining the contingency/succession plan, e.g. who will then take over the project when the original PI leaves.**

SSHR-TG. If a similar proposal was rejected under another grant (e.g. Academic Research Fund), it should be substantively refined or re-scoped before being submitted to the SSHR-TG.

- 2.7 Prior to submission, all proposals have to be verified by the Host Institution's Office of Research (ORE) or its equivalent and endorsed by the Director of Research (DOR). OREs shall inform the PIs of the terms set out in this guideline and ensure compliance by the applicants. MOE will communicate directly with the OREs for all SSHR-TG proposals. Any clarifications on the project proposals will be done within the grant call, prior to the final award decision. **PIs should not communicate with MOE directly.**
- 2.8 Please refer to the general "Guidelines on the Management of Competitive R&D Grants" in Enclosure 1, which apply to the management of SSHR-TG grants.
- 2.9 Approved SSHR-TG projects will be subject to the general "Terms and Conditions of a Competitive Grant" stipulated in Enclosure 2.

#### Approval of Project Grant

- 2.10 The start date of the SSHR-TG project is the date on which the account for the project is activated. The activation of the account should be within 6 months of the Letter of Conveyance to the Host Institution, otherwise the project approval would be considered as lapsed.
- 2.11 MOE will support indirect research costs (IRC) at a flat rate of 30%<sup>3</sup> of the total qualifying direct costs (less research scholarships<sup>4</sup>) of each approved SSHR-TG project. PIs would need to budget for the IRC within the overall cap of **Type A grant (\$1.5M)**, Type B (\$5M) and Type C grant (\$10M).

<sup>3</sup> The rate of IRC funding is subject to revision at MOE's discretion.

<sup>4</sup> Research scholarships funding is ring-fenced and cannot be transferred to other cost categories.

- 2.12 SSHR-TG, including IRC funding, is provided on a reimbursement basis. Host Institutions should therefore pay for the expenditure incurred for approved projects first, and subsequently claim for reimbursement from MOE.
- 2.13 Host Institutions 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.**

#### Unsuccessful Applications and Re-submissions

- 2.14 PIs will be notified of the results of their applications through the OREs. Appeals for unsuccessful applications will not be entertained.
- 2.15 Proposals which have been rejected for SSHR-TG funding will not be considered in the following grant calls and ORE should ensure that PIs do not re-submit the same proposals<sup>5</sup> for consideration.

### **3. Research Scholarships**

- 3.1 The existing policies that apply to students on MOE Postgraduate by Research (PGR) scholarships would similarly apply to students funded by the SSHR-TG. These include, but are not limited to, policies on stipend differentiation and the Graduate Assistantship Programme (GAP).
- 3.2 Funding for SSHR-TG research scholarships is capped at the duration of the project. Funding should only be used to cover tuition fees and stipends, in line with research scholarships funded by the MOE RSB and AcRF. Research scholarship funding is ring-fenced and cannot be transferred to other categories.

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<sup>5</sup> Proposals will be regarded as the same if there are no substantial changes. Examples of changes that are not substantial include: (i) Rewording large parts of the application while retaining the scientific goals, objectives and/or approach, (ii) Adding/removing co-PIs and collaborators, (iii) Including new preliminary data, and (iv) Deleting part of the approach, such that the subsequent application is a subset of the earlier application.

- 3.3 Autonomous Universities shall continue to manage the transition of students from SSHR-TG scholarship to RSB once the project scholarship funding expire at the end of the project or when the SSHR-TG research scholarship budget has exhausted, whichever earlier.
- 3.4 In addition, PGR students on SSHR-TG scholarships are not permitted to be concurrently employed (and receive salaries) on other MOE-funded grants, i.e. there should be no double-dipping of stipend and salary from MOE-funded grants.

## **4 Performance Management**

### Annual Reports

- 4.1 Pls are to submit soft copies of their annual progress reports for each project using the Research Grant Form (RGF4A – Progress Report Form) via their respective OREs. OREs should collate and submit all endorsed soft copies of progress reports to MOE.
- 4.2 A mid-term review will be conducted by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) for each awarded SSHR-TG project to assess the progress of the project. The second progress report for awarded Type A projects and the third<sup>6</sup> progress reports submitted for awarded Type B and Type C projects will be used to perform this mid-term review. Pls may be required to give additional information about the progress of the project if the information submitted is deemed to be inadequate.
- 4.3 Pls who fail to submit the Annual Progress Reports may be denied any grant disbursement, variation and/or extension until such progress reports are submitted.
- 4.4 Projects ending within three (3) months from the end of the reporting FY (i.e. 1 Jan – 30 Jun) are not required to submit the Annual Progress Report. Progress within this period shall be accounted for in the Final Report instead. E.g. a project with end date falling within 1 Jan 2026 – 30 Jun 2026 will not be required

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<sup>6</sup> Only for Type B and Type C projects with a minimum duration of 4 years. For Type B and Type C projects with a duration of less than 4 years, the second progress report will be used.

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to submit an Annual Progress Report by 31 May 2026, but will submit the Final Report in the same year instead.

### Final Reports

- 4.5 A completion review will be conducted by the SSRC for each awarded SSHR-TG project to ensure that the project has been completed satisfactorily and assess the impact of the research findings. The final reports submitted for awarded projects will be used to perform this completion review.

## **5 Data Sharing**

- 5.1 Subject to restrictions related to research ethics, confidentiality and intellectual property, all data generated from research funded by the SSHR-TG should be made available to user communities at the earliest feasible opportunity. This would generally be no later than the release through publication of the study's main findings, or in line with established best practices in the respective fields.

## **6 Acknowledgement Guidelines<sup>7</sup>**

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

- 6.2 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)<sup>8</sup>. 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.

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

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<sup>7</sup> Paras 6.2 and 6.3 supersede paras 44 and 45 of "Guidelines on the Management of Competitive R&D Grants".

<sup>8</sup> This shall be based on the grant award reference number, as indicated in the Letter of Award.

“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).”

## 7 Training & Education Programmes

7.1 Wherever necessary, MOE may request PIs and/or the research team to participate in education-related programmes, such as:

7.1.1 Presenting their research work in MOE schools and institutes of higher learning;

7.1.2 Supporting MOE’s and the Social Science Research Council’s initiatives in developing the social science and humanities research ecosystem in Singapore.

## 8 Grant Variation

8.1 PIs should submit all grant variation requests through the Host Institution’s OREs, using the appropriate forms:

No.	Type of Variation	Form
1	Amendments to Projects	RGF1
2	Fund Virement	RGF2

8.2 PIs should refer to “Guidance for Processing Variation Requests” ([Annex A](#)) in their preparation of the variation requests to ensure that all supporting documents have been duly completed.

8.3 OREs should evaluate the PIs’ requests and make decisions on all requests that fall within the Host Institution’s approving authority. For requests that require MOE’s approval, OREs should first evaluate the requests based on the considerations, norms and checks listed in [Annex A](#) and make recommendations for MOE’s consideration.



- 8.4 For all variation requests, MOE's decision is final and appeals will not be entertained. **Retrospective variation requests will not be allowed, unless there is compelling justification for submission of a late variation request.**

## 9 Compliance of Administrative Guideline

- 9.1 In the event of non-compliance of this administrative guideline, MOE reserves the right to:

9.1.1 Withhold or withdraw the funding;

9.1.2 Disqualify the PI from subsequent MOE competitive funding; and/or

9.1.3 Carry out any action as MOE deems appropriate.

## 10 Miscellaneous

- 10.1 Upon project award, it is the responsibility of the PI to obtain the necessary approvals from appropriate authorities before commencing any data collection. For instance, before collecting data from MOE schools (including MOE Kindergartens), Awardees must obtain approval from MOE, and comply with MOE's data collection requirements – for details, please contact:  
[MOE\\_Sch\\_Data\\_collection\\_request@moe.gov.sg](mailto:MOE_Sch_Data_collection_request@moe.gov.sg).

- 10.2 MOE reserves the right to change, include 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.

**Guidance for Processing Variation Requests**  
(Effective from 1 February 2025)

**Annex A**

S/N	Type of Request	Key considerations	Norms	Supporting Document required	Types of checks by ORE
1.	Virements	The critical role of the proposed items to project outcome and the reason it was not budgeted in original proposal.	Fund virement is to support the project only, not for support of “follow-on” research <sup>9</sup> .	RGF2	RGF2 is duly completed and endorsed. All supporting document attached. Check is done on whether requested item is in the approved budget and whether requested item is fundable.
		Cost-savings principle	It is possible for PI to use cost-savings within approved project cost to purchase essential new items not previously budgeted.  However, purchase must be based on needs; availability of savings is not a reason for new purchase.	Latest statement of account	Fund availability
				Relevant quotations	Reasonableness of quotes by cross-referencing similar purchase or independent checks  Whether proposed purchase items are already available in AU, or can be more cost-effectively leased.
		Eligibility	PIs with over-due annual and/or final reports are not allowed to submit any virement requests.	N.A.	The PI has no outstanding annual/final reports for any MOE grants.
1 a)	Virements into Expenditure on Manpower (EOM)	If new headcount is requested, PI has to explain the staff’s job scope		Job scope of additional EOM	ORE needs to assess the reasonableness of request, e.g. the job scope is not too small for the headcount. If the need is short-term, ORE needs to assess if part-time manpower is more appropriate
1 b)	Virements for Visiting Professor /Visitors <sup>10</sup>	Relevance and contribution to project outcome	The need for VP/visitors must be driven by project need (e.g. not because AU requires VP to give public lecture or other non-project activities.)	Curriculum Vitae/bio of prospective candidate	ORE needs to assess the role and expertise of the visitor.
		Track record		Job scope/deliverables of VP	ORE needs to assess reasonableness of request, e.g. the job scope is commensurate with the duration requested. Particularly, ORE needs to assess if the work can be done via email/tele-video conferencing.
		Duration of stay	The job scope and deliverables of VP must be clear for assessment of the duration required of his/her service		
2 a)	Departure <sup>11</sup> of PI/Co-PI; Change of PI/Co-PI	Suitability of proposed PI/Co-PI	Ability of the new PI/Co-PI to capture the benefits and achieve the intended objectives of the project	Information on outgoing PI/Co-PI: last day of work in University, name of institutions he will be joining, etc  CV of proposed new PI/Co-PI/ Job scope of replacement PI/Co-PI/Letter of recommendation  Written confirmation from HR that the proposed PI/Co-PI meets the eligibility criteria	Application should reach MOE 3 months in advance before PI/Co-PI leaves (for contract expiry/termination cases; sabbatical or other extended leave) and as soon as practicable for resignation cases. ORE should consider working closely with HR and schools to ensure timeliness especially in submitting change of PI requests.  ORE needs to determine whether the proposed PI /Co-PI is eligible based on the eligibility criteria and whether he/she is suitable and has the skills to continue and complete the research work  If in doubt, request for Letter of recommendation from current employer of proposed PI/Co-PI.

<sup>9</sup> An exception is for PIs whose requests for 6-month extensions to explore additional scope are approved.

<sup>10</sup> Visitors includes staff who have short-term appointments with the AU and concurrently retain full-time positions overseas. This is regardless of the job title such staff may have (e.g. Research Fellow/Visiting Research Fellow) at the AU. Also includes speakers and participants of conferences/events organised as part of the programme.

<sup>11</sup> This includes resignations, retirement, extended no-pay leave, extended sabbatical leave as well as other instances where the PI/Co-PI may be considered to no longer meet the eligibility criteria.

S/N	Type of Request	Key considerations	Norms	Supporting Document required	Types of checks by ORE
		<b>Applicable to Departure of PI:</b> MOE reserves the right to terminate the grant if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No suitable replacement is found;</li> <li>Proposed PI is rejected; or</li> <li>New PI cannot achieve the necessary outcomes.</li> </ul>		<b>Applicable to Departure of PI:</b> Mitigation Plan: Department and new PI should jointly develop a mitigation plan to sustain/resuscitate the project, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>setting new milestones/KPIs</li> <li>taking steps to ensure students' graduation is not disrupted</li> <li>committing to put in all necessary resources and time</li> </ul> The plan should be signed off by both the dean of department and the new PI.  Should the PI plan to be away for more than 3 contiguous months in a year and/or cease active involvement in the project, the AU should submit a mitigation plan to MOE at least 2 months in advance, to explain how the project will be kept on track. The AU may also wish to propose a covering PI. The mitigation plan must be endorsed by the department and DTL.	<p>ORE needs to assess the feasibility of the mitigation plan.</p> <p>Where the PI leaves the institution less than 1 year after the start of the project, ORE should explain why the PI is doing so, despite declaring that he/she has no plans to leave the university within the duration of the project when accepting the grant. Please note that change of PI requests arising from PI resignations will generally be viewed less favourably in the first year.</p>
2 b)	Project Extension	Impact on deliverables and usefulness of final research outcome in view of the delay	To ensure currency of research, extension will be capped at 6 months	Evidence of satisfactory progress (e.g. copies of publication arising from the research, abstracts of conferences attended etc)	<p>For extension requests that are motivated by project delays, a cap of 3 months will be applied.</p> <p>MOE may consider a no-cost extension of 6 months only if the PI is able to demonstrate excellent scientific progress. Such PIs can use this extension to explore follow-on research that is beyond the original scope of the project. As a general rule of thumb, the PI should have met the key project deliverables (i.e. publications and conferences) before submitting such requests. PI must submit a 1-page write-up on the additional research to be done during the extension.</p>
		Cost implications	Must be within approved budget.	Revised Project Implementation Schedule (Gantt Chart)	
2 c)	Change of scope	Change of scope to pursue different research objectives is not allowed; this should be submitted as a new proposal.		N.A.	N.A.
2 d)	Post-project Conference Travel	Timing and importance of conference.		Acceptance of conference presentation/paper.	The conference presentation/paper should be accepted before the project end-date. The conference is within 3 months from the project end-date. Variation request should be submitted to MOE within a month from the date the conference presentation/paper is accepted. ORE must confirm that the conference presentation arises from work supported by the grant. DOR/HOD should explain why it is important for the PI to participate in the conference.
2 e)	Change of Autonomous University by the PI	Impact on the project		<p>Variation request endorsed by DORs of both the original and new AU.</p> <p>Transition plan, showing how the transfer will take place with minimal disruption.</p>	ORE needs to assess the feasibility of the transition plan

S/N	Type of Request	Key considerations	Norms	Supporting Document required	Types of checks by ORE
2 f)	Termination	Alternative options to termination	Other options should be explored to ensure that the best outcome is achieved with the investment already made.	<p>Department report: Department should prepare a report that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of what went wrong for the project</li> <li>• What are the alternatives to terminations and why they are not applicable in this case</li> <li>• Preventive measures to avoid future occurrence.</li> </ul> <p>The report should be signed off by both the dean of department and the director of research.</p>	ORE to assess the adequacy of the report and winding-down budget/plan.