Explanatory Notes for Completing the
Quality Education Fund (QEF) Application Form
for Applications with Grant Sought Not Exceeding $200,000
(to be read in conjunction with the 'Guide To Applicants')

This explanatory note is designed to provide information on the arrangement for submission of applications for the QEF with grant sought not exceeding $200,000. The arrangement aims to facilitate applicants to apply for grants to implement worthwhile pilot initiatives and one-off projects that would suit the specific needs of students, teachers and contexts of individual schools.

Applications for the QEF with grant sought NOT exceeding $200,000 should be made by completing the proposal template at **Annex V** for preparing a project proposal for submission through the Electronic Project Management System (EPMS) on the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).

Registration as EPMS User

Organisations and individuals who are interested in applying for or collaborating/participating in a QEF project are required to register as a user and create a user account in the EPMS. For registration, it is necessary to complete and submit the registration form via the EPMS and send by mail to the QEF Secretariat relevant documents proving that the organisation is registered under the laws in Hong Kong or his/her status as a permanent resident in Hong Kong, whichever is applicable. Should all information and documents provided be proper, the registration process will be completed normally within seven working days.

Provided that the applications submitted are complete and all required documents are proper, applications with grant sought not exceeding $200,000 will be processed normally within three to four months (subject to the number of applications received). The applicant should take into consideration of the time required to revise the project proposal in accordance with the conditions of approval as stipulated by the QEF and to sign an agreement with the QEF.

Part A   Project Particulars

Project Period

1.   The first date of the month stated will be regarded as the commencement date and the last date of the month stated will be regarded as the end date. The applicant should only commence the project after funding approval has been obtained from the QEF and agreement has been signed with the Fund. The applicant should insert a realistic commencement date for the proposed project.

Particulars of Applicant

2.   If the applicant is an organisation, please state the name of the organisation and the head of the organisation. For tertiary institutions, please state the name of the department/ centre and the head of the department/centre.

Part B   Project Proposal

3.   The project proposal should not exceed **six pages** of **A4 size** at font size no smaller than **11 points** and single line spacing. Documents submitted should be in **pdf format**. The electronic application form and the project proposal should be submitted through the EPMS (http://qef.org.hk). The QEF will assess details of the project based on the criteria listed at **Annex II(a)**. The QEF reserves the right not to process project proposal exceeding the page limit or the right to ask applicant to further explain the proposal and seek additional information where necessary. Unless on request of the QEF Secretariat, supplementary information provided after submission of application will NOT be accepted and will NOT form part of the application.

Targets and Expected Number of Beneficiaries

4.   The applicant should specify the target groups (e.g. students, teachers, parents) with respective number of participants, number of classes or class levels as well as the expected number of direct and indirect beneficiaries, where appropriate. For projects involving more than one participating school, the expected number of beneficiaries in each school should be stated.

Project Goals and Objectives

5.   The applicant should state the project aims in clear and concise terms. In case of schools, the aims should be consistent with the identified needs of the applicant school and be compatible with the educational priorities of the school system. The aims should indicate observable behavioural changes in the target beneficiary group. Specifically, the statements should identify:-
  •   Audience – the target beneficiary group
  •   Behaviour – the target performance (or learning outcomes) or behavioural changes
  •   Conditions – situation under which the behavioural changes are expected to occur
  •   Degree – the criteria for measuring success

Needs and Priority of Schools

6.   The applicant should give a background against which the project is conceived, e.g. literature review or survey findings. School-based applications should briefly describe its own context, i.e. the school's present situation, learning characteristics of students and achievement against the project goals. It is important to state how the project will become part of the school's strategic development, i.e. how the project meets the needs and priorities of the school and the students. The applicant may also describe the relevant experience in implementing projects or activities of similar nature.

Innovation

7.   **As the QEF encourages innovation and/or new development, new ideas or practices to be introduced and new strategies or methodologies to be adopted should be elaborated.** They can be unique and pilot in nature including new ideas and implementation method suitable for the target beneficiaries, and to supplement and/or complement the existing practices that will facilitate their development to address the needs specific to their own contexts or the education sector to bring about positive capacity and/or impact on learning and teaching. **They can also be new or further developed ideas that are building on projects with successful experiences and good practices (including enhancement, adaptation).** For applications which build on projects with successful experiences and good practices, the new elements

to be introduced should be provided, such as meeting new development needs or suiting different school contexts.

Approach / Design / Activity

8. The applicant should describe the design of the project by stating the approach / activities to be adopted for attaining the project objectives. Relevant literature review / elaboration of rationale or professional principles may also be included.

Implementation Plan with Timeline

9. The implementation plan should include the schedule and details of the activities to be organised and state the target beneficiary of the proposed activities when appropriate. The proposal should list out the key stages of implementation so as to allow effective monitoring of project progress. The proposal should also give details of collaboration with other parties, if any.

Teachers' and Principals' Involvement in the Project

10. The applicant must explain clearly the degree of teachers' and/or principals' involvement and their role in the project. The QEF aims to encourage teachers to participate in and principals to support the projects rather than contracting out the services, thereby enhancing their professional competence. The applicant should provide the qualification and experiences requirements of tutors/instructors/ consultants, etc. where necessary.

Budget

11. All project funds must be exclusively used for the project and incurred within the project period. The applicant should submit a detailed budget with justifications. Unless under special circumstances, funding of the QEF will only cover expenses incurred during the period between the commencement date and the end date of the project as set out in the agreement signed with the Government.

12. In preparing the budget, the applicant should make reference to the latest market price, including remuneration packages commensurate with qualifications and experience of the proposed personnel, and the pricing standards suggested on the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk). Strict economy should be exercised in incurring any expenses to avoid lavishness. The applicant can also refer to the general principles for determining allowable costs stipulated in the QEF 'General Guidelines on Management and Monitoring of Projects'.

13. External tutors, instructors or speakers can be employed, if required. Remuneration for them should be calculated on an hourly basis.

14. Some projects may require the employment of short-term or part-time personnel, such as guest speakers, research assistants and technicians to carry out duties specific to the project. Salaries of such personnel should be calculated on a time-on-project basis. While salary should be commensurate with qualifications and experience, candidates are normally assumed to be appointed at the minimum pay rates. Strong justifications are required for the appointment of personnel at higher pay rates.

15. To ensure fairness, staff must be recruited through an open and competitive system. Besides, the estimated staff costs should not include any 'hidden' costs. For

example, as teachers are already paid, additional remunerations should not be given for their participating in the projects and such expenses should not be included in the budget. If it is essential for a teacher to be engaged full time on the project over a prolonged period, consideration may be given to the appointment of a supply teacher with the qualifications and experience comparable to the teacher staff concerned by the school so as to minimise any adverse impact on the students and alleviate the workload on the teacher.

16. All project personnel, if employed on a full-time basis, should be remunerated on a fixed salary point during the whole project period. In normal circumstances, salary increment is not granted. Fringe benefits of staff e.g. education allowance, medical insurance, housing allowance, etc should not be included in or charged to the project. Terms of employment should be specified in accordance with the Employment Ordinance, Employees' Compensation Ordinance and, where applicable, the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance. Brief job descriptions and qualifications required for the project personnel should be provided.

17. For equipment items such as computer, digital camera, Tablet PC, projector, etc., the applicant should deploy its resources, where possible, and those acquired in previously funded QEF projects for implementation of the proposed project. Strong justifications including the proposed usage rate and the use of equipment items to enhance learning and teaching effectiveness (such as mobile devices catering for the needs of a specific group of students) have to be provided for acquisition of the above equipment and other asset items.

Should the application be approved, the applicant should revise the proposal to include an asset usage plan to account for the deployment of reusable equipment and assets upon project completion. Reference could be made to the 'General Guidelines on Handling of Assets' on the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).

18. All procurements of goods and services should be carried out on an open, fair and competitive basis.

19. The 'General Expenses' item is a catch-all category for costs which cannot be included in any of the other items. Details of the item with justifications and breakdown should be provided. For projects submitted by tertiary institutes funded by the University Grants Committee that incur administrative charges, the institute may include the item in the budget together with details, justifications and breakdown. In general, such charges should not be more than 15% of the total budget exclusive of contingency. Where projects are conducive to the own activities of the applicants or intermediary organisations or may bring benefits to them, the applicant should absorb part of the administrative charges.

20. The applicant is advised to include an adjustment for inflation/deflation not exceeding the prevailing rate when preparing for projects which extend beyond a year. A contingency provision of not more than 3% of the total budget exclusive of staff cost is considered acceptable for projects lasting for more than one year.

21. The principle of economy and cost effectiveness of expenditure should be observed in budgeting. The applicant should make the best use of the existing facilities and resources including those acquired under previously funded QEF projects, if applicable, to implement the project. Item descriptions that are too brief and without justifications may not be considered for funding support.

22.   The QEF sponsors the costs/fees of students participating in activities including camps, study trips, leadership training programmes, etc.

23.   For projects which involve trips for students outside Hong Kong, the QEF sponsors half of the cost/fee of students participating in the activities or half of the funding ceiling, whichever is the lower. The funding ceiling will be based on the destination of the trip.

The funding ceiling on the cost/fee of the trip per student is as follows:

Destination	Funding Ceiling per Student per Trip
• Asia (including the Mainland China and Middle East)	$ 6,500
• Africa	$10,500
• Europe and America	$11,500

The QEF would provide additional funding support to socio-economically disadvantaged students enrolled in the activities. The actual subsidy for each student may vary depending on their social-economic background.

- For students in receipt of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or full remission under the Student Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS), they will receive 100% support of the costs/fees involved in their overseas trips or the funding ceiling of the respective destination, i.e. $6,500 / $10,500 / $11,500, whichever is the lower.
- For students in receipt of half remission under the SFAS, they will receive 75% support of the costs/fees involved in their overseas trips or the funding ceiling of the respective destination, i.e. $4,875 / $7,875 / $8,625, whichever is the lower.
- For general students, they will receive 50% support of the costs/fees involved in their overseas trips or the funding ceiling of the respective destination, i.e. $3,250 / $5,250 / $5,750, whichever is the lower.

24.   Student trips supported by the QEF should have learning and teaching elements which should be relevant to school curriculum. QEF may provide top-up funding according to the principle set out in paragraph [23] to sponsor needy students to participate in educational visits, including those supported/organised by the Government and/or other organisations.

25.   The QEF encourages the applicant to collaborate with other organisations on funding arrangements. The applicant is requested to provide detailed information on the subsidy, if any, from sources other than the QEF including the source(s), availability date and amount. More favourable consideration will be given to applicants with matching contribution.

26.   Grantees of projects with approved grant exceeding $100,000 are required to submit audited accounts upon project completion and they could include the audit fees under this item. QEF will cover up to $5,000 of the audit fee for a project with approved grant of $1 million or less, and up to $15,000 for a project with approved grant exceeding $1 million.

27.   Should the application be approved, the applicant should open and maintain with a licensed bank in Hong Kong a bank account for the sole purpose of keeping and

transacting all monies of the Grant. For tertiary institutes, a separate ledger in the Grantee's accounting system should be set up designated for the said purpose. Details could be found in the 'Agreement Between the Permanent Secretary for Education Incorporated and the Grantee on Quality Education Fund' on the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk). The Grant should be deposited to the designated account of the applicant bearing account names such as "ABC Primary School – QEF Account" and "XYZ Association – QEF Account".

Expected Project Outcomes

28.   The applicant should state the expected tangible deliverables such as publications, websites and educational resources developed and/or intangible outcomes such as impact on learning.

29.   If the project deliverables include a website or electronic books, the applicant may consider the feasibility of hosting the electronic deliverables on the school website or other professional educational portals such as the HKEdCity (www.hkedcity.net).

Project Evaluation

30.   A self-evaluation model has to be included in each application. The applicant should set out the parameters for evaluating the effectiveness of the project. He/She should also specify a rigorous evaluation methodology as an integral part of the project design to facilitate internal evaluation and external validation of project effectiveness. A criterion-referenced, evidence-based approach to evaluation should be adopted. The focus should be placed on the outputs, expected outcomes, impact and effectiveness, including cost effectiveness. In addition, the application should have clearly designated indicators and measures of success along with the means by which relevant data will be collected. A recommended model and some useful reference materials are available on the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).

Part C   Details of Collaborating / Participating Organisations

31.   Applicants should seek prior consent from the collaborating/participating schools and organisations for the project, and provide a list of collaborating / participating schools and organisations in the EPMS. The collaborating/participating schools and organisations are required to confirm collaboration/participation in the EPMS within 14 days from the date of submission of the application.

32.   Applications will be processed upon receipt of confirmations from the collaborating/participating schools and organisations in the EPMS. Should no confirmation be made, the schools and organisations concerned will not be counted as valid collaborators/participants.

Part D Declaration

33.   The head/person-in-charge of the applicant organisation should confirm the organisation's eligibility for application and declare that all the information given in the application is true and accurate and there is no duplication of funding from other Government sources for the same activities. Should the application be approved, he/she is also required to pledge to participate actively in project promotion, publicity and dissemination activities in respect of his/her project.

34.   All school applicants should confirm that upon receiving approval of the project, the school applicant will produce a documentary proof of endorsement by the School Management Committee / Incorporated Management Committee that the project aligns with the needs and development of the school and the project is supported by teachers.

Application

35.   **All applications should be submitted through EPMS on the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).**

36.   Enquiries should be addressed to the **QEF Secretariat**
Address :   Room 403, 4/F,
                    14 Taikoo Wan Road, Hong Kong
Hotline :   2921 8833
Fax :   2186 8183
Email: qefenq@edb.gov.hk

Specific assessment criteria for applications with grant sought not exceeding $200,000

Project Needs

1. <u>School Needs/Development</u>
    The needs of beneficiary school(s)/education sector should be identified and substantiated with evidence. The project should meet the identified needs and add value to school's development.

2. <u>Goals and Objectives</u>
    The project goals should align with the identified needs / school's development plan and Government's education priorities. The objectives should be realistic and achievable, stating the beneficiaries, the attributes to be assessed and the target performance.

3. <u>Innovation</u>
    Innovative ideas or new practices to enhance, adapt, complement and/or supplement the existing practices that will facilitate the new development of schools to address the needs specific to their own contexts or the education sector to bring about positive capacity and / or impact on learning and teaching should be elaborated in the proposal.

Project Feasibility

4. <u>Project Design</u>
    The proposal should be supported by professional justifications or rationale, or conceptual framework reflecting evidence or insights from research and literature. There should be detailed and feasible implementation plan which includes specific timelines, modes of operation, target participants and personnel involved for the implementation. The proposed activities should be coherent with the stated objectives. The applicant's readiness should be illustrated by relevant supporting documents, survey findings of stakeholders' initial response and the availability of the required expertise and resources.

5. <u>Staff Development</u>
    The principal/teachers should play an active role in the project design, implementation and management. Apart from knowledge transfer, there should be evidence of collaboration, teamwork and sharing among teachers or other groups such as parents.

6. <u>Budget and Commitment</u>
    The budget should be commensurate with the expected project outcome and scale of the project, in line with the QEF pricing standards, with all expensive items justified. The existing facilities and resources should be optimized to ensure cost-effectiveness.

Expected Project Outcome

7. <u>Evaluation</u>
    The proposed evaluation method should be concrete; the data to be collected and the method to analyze the collected data should be specified. The instruments and indicators used should be appropriate for the scale of the project and measuring the overall success in meeting the objectives of the project.