Quality Education Fund for 2018/19
Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Priority Themes

1. Q : When will the QEF renew the priority themes?

A : The QEF will renew the priority themes on 29 May 2018 to further promote innovative projects to enhance the quality of education.

2. Q : What are priority themes?

A : Priority themes are designated by the QEF with reference to the prevailing directions of the education sector and the changing needs of the society and schools. The content of the priority themes are renewed as necessary. The priority themes cover areas to which the QEF would give priority consideration in assessing proposals. Elaboration on the respective priority themes is given to facilitate the preparation of proposals.

3. Q : Is it necessary for the applicant to select a priority theme for the proposed project?

A : When the applicants submit proposals with grant sought exceeding $200,000, they must select the most appropriate priority theme that best fits the contents of the proposal. If no priority theme is appropriate for the proposal, the applicant can choose “other theme”. For proposals with grant sought not exceeding $200,000, while there is no need to select a priority theme, applicants are welcome to indicate the most appropriate priority theme in the application form when they submit their proposals.

4. Q : What are the priority themes of this year?

A : Eleven priority themes will be launched for 2018/19 to enhance the quality of school education starting from 29 May 2018. They are:

(1) Catering for Students’ Learning Diversity;
(2) Effective Learning and Teaching of Languages;
(3) Enhancing Learning and Teaching, and Assessment Literacy with a view to Enhancing Student Learning Outcomes in Primary General Studies, Key Learning Areas/Subject Curricula, and Liberal Studies;
(4) Using e-Learning (IT) for Effective Learning;
(5) Values Education;
(6) Creative Arts and Culture Education;
(7) Healthy Lifestyle and Positive Development of Students;
(8) Support for Students with Diverse Needs;
(9) Promoting Whole-person Development among Kindergarten Children;
(10) Supporting Effective School Management and Leadership; and
(11) Teacher Development and Wellness for Promoting Schools as Learning Organisations.

5. **Q**: What are the aims of the priority themes for 2018/19?

**A**: There are 6 themes under “**Learning and Teaching**”:

(1) **Catering for Learners’ Diversity**
Projects under this theme should aim at creating an environment or strategy conducive to quality education in catering for learners’ diversity to achieve the seven learning goals in the school curriculum, and enhancing students’ learning effectiveness in different Key Learning Areas (KLA), academic subjects, learning experience, and specific generic competencies such as thinking skills, creativity, communication, and self-management. Applicants may develop instructional packages, organise programmes / activities, adopt various teaching strategies or pedagogical innovations and provide support services to cater for students of different aptitude, interests, abilities and cultural background in schools, students with special educational needs (SEN), children newly arrived from the Mainland (NAC), non-Chinese speaking (NCS) children, cross-boundary students (CBS) and gifted / twice exceptional (2e) students, at class / group, school curriculum, school organisational, or systemic / school network level.

(2) **Effective Learning and Teaching of Languages**
Projects under this theme should aim at enhancing the learning and teaching effectiveness of languages, including English Language, Chinese Language and Putonghua, strengthening the reading culture in schools, and catering for learner diversity to enhance students’ language proficiency and cultural competency for study, work and leisure with the help of innovative measures.

(3) **Enhancing Learning and Teaching, and Assessment Literacy with a view to Enhancing Student Learning Outcomes in Primary General Studies, Key Learning Areas/Subject Curricula, and Liberal Studies**
Projects under this theme should aim to explore innovative and effective learning and teaching strategies informed by both theory and evidence /action research to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment of new initiatives/latest curricula in both primary and secondary schools.

(4) **Using e-Learning (IT) for Effective Learning**
Projects under this theme should aim at promoting e-learning by making
use of Information Technology (IT) and in combination with associated learning, teaching and assessment strategies, with a view to enhancing learning and teaching / pedagogical innovations, catering for learner diversity, and encouraging students’ pursuit of self-directed learning and life-long education. To allow students to reap the benefits of e-learning, applicants may propose developing school-based e-learning tools/materials to cater for students’ learning needs, making good use of or enhancing the school IT environment to implement certain e-learning activities, trying out school-based e-learning resources and pedagogy, fostering capacity building among teachers, etc. To promote effective and ethical use of information and IT, applicants may propose measures to enhance information literacy and awareness on e-safety among students and parents.

(5) Values Education
Projects under this theme should aim at nurturing in students the values / attitudes of perseverance, self-respect, respect for others, responsibility, commitment, rule of law, justice, rationality, environmental conservation, integrity and care for others by integrating them with the school mission / aims of education and enhancing students’ independent thinking to enable them to make sophisticated, rational and responsible decisions. These would include programmes like life education, Basic Law education, sex education, environmental education, character education, moral and civic education, ethical and religious education and the like. They can also help teachers to plan and guide students to develop OLE and students’ learning profiles, and to reflect on their personal, social, academic development and career planning starting from junior secondary level, so as to foster students to become positive and responsible citizens contributing to the betterment of the society, the country and the world. Special emphasis could be on the roles of class teachers in values education.

(6) Creative Arts and Culture Education
Projects under this theme should aim to enhance students’ creativity, arts abilities and cultural literacy, as well as strengthen learning and teaching innovation of the arts.

There are 3 themes under “Support for Students and School Ethos”:

(1) Healthy Lifestyle and Positive Development of Students
Projects under this theme should aim at encouraging the education sector to achieve a comprehensive and wholesome lifestyle and supporting the developmental needs of students by a whole-school approach.

(2) Support for Students with Diverse Needs
Projects under this theme should aim at cultivating a caring and inclusive environment and helping students with diverse needs to attain all-round and healthy development through the provision of a harmonious and nurturing environment and student support programmes for students with SEN, gifted / twice-exceptional (2e) students, students with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (including NAC, NCS children and CBS, students at-risk with mental health, behavioural, emotional or family problems, etc.

(3) Promoting Whole-person Development among Kindergarten Children
Projects under this theme should aim at supporting kindergartens in developing an integrated, comprehensive and balanced curriculum to foster children’s whole-person development in the five domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social and aesthetics in kindergartens; and establish a learning organisation culture.

There are 2 themes under “Management and Organisation”:

(1) Supporting Effective School Management and Leadership
Projects under this theme should aim at helping schools / school sponsoring bodies (SSB) in the territory to adopt effective practices and systems on effective school management and leadership skills for facilitating continuous school improvement and long-term sustainability. They should also aim at assisting schools / SSB to further strengthen the school leaders’ capacity and administration skills, including knowledge on the deployment and management of different resources, managing daily operations, involving middle management in devising school development plans and budgets, devising succession plans, communicating with stakeholders and handling complaints.

(2) Teacher Development and Wellness for Promoting Schools as Learning Organisations
Projects under this theme should aim at supporting schools to plan and devise strategies for promoting schools as learning organisations to facilitate teachers’ professional development and learning through a variety of ways. A balanced range of professional development programmes focusing on different breadth and depth of knowledge and skills, such as self-learning, action learning, tailor-made staff development programmes and attachments, could be arranged to cater for the development of teachers at different stages of professional maturity as well as the different roles and functions of teachers, e.g. form masters, counselling and career guidance teachers. They should also aim at creating space for teachers’ professional growth and adopting a whole-school approach for enhancing the physical and emotional well-being of teachers.
6. Q: What are the major changes to the priority themes? Which is the new priority theme of this year?

A: The priority themes this year are the same as that of 2017/18 school year. The QEF will continue to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and innovation, and use e-learning to facilitate learning and teaching, enhance students’ language proficiency, boost their knowledge and learning motivation in Chinese history and culture as well as the Basic Law, promote student exchange activities on the Mainland and in countries/cities along The Belt and Road, support kindergarten education, strengthen the support measures for specific student groups, and promote mental health activities to support students with relevant needs, while continuing to nurture positive values in students. In all these aspects, cross-sector collaboration among tertiary institutions, professional organisations and other organisations will be encouraged.

7. Q: Can applicants submit applications beyond the priority themes?

A: The QEF welcomes applications beyond the priority themes. School-based innovative projects which meet the needs of schools and enhance the quality of school education, and innovative projects which build on previous QEF projects are welcome. As for applications with grant sought not exceeding $200,000, there is no need to select a priority theme.

8. Q: Can applicants submit an application which covers several priority themes?

A: It is common for schools to adopt cross-curricular and cross-KLA approaches in learning. The QEF welcomes applications that cover more than one priority theme or cut across different themes. Applicants should choose the priority theme that best suits the key focus of their project proposals when they submit applications.

9. Q: Can applicants submit an application proposal involving educational researches?

A: Although researches is not a stand-alone priority theme, the QEF welcomes application proposals involving evidence-based educational researches which are aligned with the current education policies in Hong Kong and benefit kindergarten, primary, secondary and special education sectors. Such educational researches, irrespective of their scales, may include basic researches on educational practices, action researches as well as applied researches and evaluation to solve specific educational problems (in collaboration with schools).
Generally speaking, the theoretical framework of an educational research should be aligned with the practical needs of schools and students. In this regard, participation of schools and provision of relevant activities to students and teachers should be included in applications involving educational researches, of which the research findings could create positive impact on the development of school education.

10. Q : What is meant by school-based innovative projects?

A : School-based innovations should not narrowly be interpreted as original proposals that have never been implemented. Innovative projects would cover new ideas or practices (including enhancement and/or adaptation) which serve to supplement and/or complement the existing practices that would facilitate the development of schools to address the needs specific to their own contexts. This also covers projects which can build on and further expand the new ideas or practices that have been generated from projects previously funded by the QEF. In fact, the QEF supports school-based innovative projects which can meet the needs and are in line with the development plans of schools.

Application Arrangement

11. Q : Apart from the priority themes, will the QEF continue the application arrangement for applications with grant sought not exceeding $200,000?

A : The introduction of the application arrangement for applications with grant sought not exceeding $150,000 in 2014 has been well-received by the school sector; hence the number of applications has been substantially increased. The QEF has maintained the application arrangement and increased the ceiling amount of such applications to $200,000 in 2017. For such kind of applications, each applicant has to submit a project proposal within six pages. Each applicant can submit at most TWO such applications under any theme in different contexts on top of the existing quota. The applications will be processed normally within three to four months subject to the number of applications received.

12. Q : What is the maximum number of applications an applicant can submit in each school year?

A : For school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 applications (grant sought &gt;$200,000) of different themes (ONE such application must seek grant of not exceeding $600,000)</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>2 applications (grant sought ≤$200,000) of any theme in different contexts</th>
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<tr>
<td>= 5 Applications</td>
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For each independent faculty / department / centre of tertiary institutions:

- 3 applications (grant sought >$200,000) of different themes
- 2 applications (grant sought ≤$200,000) of any theme in different contexts

= 5 Applications

For organisation and individual:

- 2 applications (grant sought >$200,000) of different themes
- 2 applications (grant sought ≤$200,000) of any theme in different contexts

= 4 Applications

Note: Collaborative mini applications under the ‘Joyful@School’ Campaign will not be subject to the quota for mini applications (the existing quota for each applicant is two per school year).

13. Q: What is the arrangement for applications with grant sought not exceeding $200,000 if the NGOs/TEIs collaborate with schools to apply for subsidies to implement activities under the “Joyful@School Campaign”?

A: NGOs/TEIs can collaborate with schools to submit applications to QEF for funding not exceeding $200,000 to implement activities to enhance students’ awareness and understanding of mental health under the Campaign. An information note (with details of the approved projects) has been uploaded onto the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).

14. Q: How does QEF assist kindergartens in implementing new innovative measures?

A: In 2017, the EDB has introduced the Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide which stresses the construction of knowledge and concept to nurture positive values and attitudes in children. 3 key learning elements, i.e. “knowledge”, “skills” and “value and attitudes” are covered in the curriculum with a view to nurturing children to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics to prepare them for a better living and solid foundation for studies in the future. Promoting Whole Child Development in Kindergarten Education and Support for Students with Diverse Needs are the priority themes of the QEF. Since their introduction of mini applications (with grant sought not exceeding $200,000) in 2014, they have been well-received by pre-primary institutions. QEF will continue to support the pre-primary institutions to apply for the QEF.

15. Q: What are the criteria for assessing project proposals?
A: Project proposals will be assessed in accordance with, but not limited to, the criteria under the following three areas, viz Project Needs, Project Feasibility and Expected Project Outcomes. The project proposals must demonstrate an innovative element and strive to meet the criteria in all the three areas. Innovations, conceptual framework, implementation plan with realistic timeline and detailed budget of expenditure items with justifications should also be provided. Other details can be found in the Guide to Applicants uploaded to the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).

16. Q: What are the common causes of failure among those unsuccessful project proposals?

A: In general, unsuccessful project proposals lack clear goals, concrete, comprehensive and / or feasible project design and innovative elements on the project objectives, rationale and implementation method to address the needs specific to Hong Kong or schools. There are quite a few project proposals which are not cost-effective with insufficient justifications for the expenditure items, or lack sustainability / evaluation / implementation plans. Attention should be paid to the file format of the project proposal for submitting an application through the electronic means as well as the processing time of an application for scheduling a realistic commencement date for the project.

17. Q: What should applicants take note of when setting out the project idea and design?

A: Applicants should have a thorough understanding of the learning activities / services currently provided for students and elaborate in their project proposals on how the projects can supplement the weaknesses of the existing practices / services. Applicants from non-school or non-educational bodies should also ensure that project proposals must be closely related to school education, and demonstrate they have a good understanding of the situation and needs of the schools in Hong Kong, and the proposed projects can provide innovative elements in learning and teaching and ways to solve the existing problems. Besides, applicants should note the latest trends of educational development and reforms in order to draw up insightful project proposals.

When designing and drawing up the project proposal, each part of the proposal should be inter-related. For instance, the proposed project activities should be designed for attaining the project objectives effectively and the evaluation strategies adopted should be able to measure the effectiveness of the project accurately, etc. With regard to the implementation plan, the necessary conditions, implementation schedule and relevant details should be provided in the proposal. In addition, a proposal should elaborate on the expertise of the project team rather than just quoting any particular experts / scholars, to demonstrate
that the whole team possesses the relevant expertise for conducting the project.

Last but not least, for applications which build on previously funded projects, new ideas / practices to be introduced or improvement measures to be adopted should be highlighted. Applications with repeated project activities of highly similar nature and practice should be discouraged.

18. Q : Does the QEF allow employment of project staff at a rate higher than the minimum pay rates applicable to similar personnel?

A : Some projects may require the employment of short-term or part-time staff, such as guest speakers, research assistants and technicians, to carry out duties specific to the project and their pay rates are 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 applicable to similar personnel. Strong justifications have to be provided for the appointment of staff at higher pay rates.

19. Q : As a non-governmental organisation or tertiary institution, what should we notice when applying for QEF?

A : NGOs and tertiary institutions should propose insightful projects in response to the latest trends and reforms on educational development. The proposal should be closely connected with school education and address the current situation and needs of the schools of Hong Kong with a view to infusing innovative teaching elements and providing solutions to educational problems.

In order to address the specific needs of the target service recipients, NGOs and tertiary institutions should have a thorough understanding on the current situation of the educational activities and student services in the participating schools and collaborate with school teachers on planning for conducting project activities which are not covered by the current services.

20. Q : Is there any measure for supporting students in participating in the proposed learning activities?

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

For projects which involve trips for students outside Hong Kong, a funding ceiling on the cost of the trip per student is set at $6,500 (Asia, including Mainland China and Middle East), $10,500 (Africa), and $11,500 (Europe and America).
The actual subsidy for each student may vary depending on their socio-economic background. Students in receipt of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and full remission under the Student Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS) can 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 those in receipt of half remission under the SFAS can get 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 can get 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 according to their destination, whichever is the lower.

21. Q : Does the QEF support projects involving study trips outside Hong Kong?

A : The QEF supports projects involving educational visits and exchange programmes outside Hong Kong to broaden students’ horizons and learning experiences, learn about different cultures and enhance language proficiency. Applicants can include cross boundary learning and exchange activities in accordance with the priority themes and the different learning needs of the students. If the school-based projects initiated by schools involve learning activities outside Hong Kong (including those in the Mainland and overseas), such as cross-boundary learning activities, the proposals should elaborate on the planning of the entire learning programme, with cross-boundary learning activities forming an integral part of and complementing other elements of the programme, in order to ensure that the cross-boundary learning activities under planning are specific to the abilities and needs of the participating students.

22. Q : Does the QEF support applications to purchase IT hardware such as tablet PCs, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and WiFi infrastructure?

A : The QEF welcomes all applications which are in line with the prevailing education policies and the direction of the central curriculum in Hong Kong. Applicants should explain clearly in the proposals the project aims and the implementation details, such as the demonstrated need for acquisition of the IT hardware, justifications for requesting extra IT hardware/ resources, the effective use of the proposed equipment, the deployment of the applicants’ existing IT resources to achieve the project goals, etc. An application which solely aims at purchasing IT hardware without demonstrating the learning and teaching elements or teaching strategies to illustrate teachers’ involvement and the effective way to
utilise the acquired IT hardware will not be supported.

23. **Q :** If the school applicants have benefitted from the “The Fourth Strategy on IT in Education” to enhance their WiFi infrastructure and acquire mobile computing devices, can they submit applications to the QEF to purchase IT facilities?

   **A :** The QEF encourages school applicants to submit applications under the priority theme “Using e-Learning (IT) for Effective Learning” to develop e-learning materials with integration of multi-media and interactive elements, and appropriate teaching strategies, to help students master the learning content, self-directed learning and collaborative learning.

   Normally, applicants should not duplicate any projects which have already received other government funding. Schools wishing to acquire extra resources on top of the specific grant provided by the EDB should elaborate on the project aim and implementation plan in detail, such as the need for acquisition or enhancement of the IT facilities, justifications for requesting extra IT hardware/ resources, the effective use of the proposed facilities and the deployment of the existing IT resources to achieve the project goals.

24. **Q :** The QEF has provided Matching Grant to support schools on “Use of New Technology for School Administrative Work” to reduce teachers’ non-teaching workload. Can schools still apply for such funding?

   **A :** Public sector secondary, primary and special schools offering formal curriculum are eligible to apply for the Matching Grant on “Use of New Technology for School Administrative Work” provided that they have not been granted such funding by the QEF before. The same assessment mechanism will be adopted by the QEF. The ceiling of the matching grant remains at $115,000. Successful applications are available on the QEF Cyber Resource Centre (http://qcrc.qef.org.hk) for reference.

25. **Q :** Is there arrangement for applicants to refine an unsuccessful application and make a resubmission? What are the details?

   **A :** Applicants can refine each unsuccessful proposal and resubmit it once within 12 months from the submission date of the unsuccessful application.
Successful Applicants’ Commitments

26. Q: What are the commitments of applicants if their application is successful?

A: Applicants will be required to sign an Agreement with the Trustee of QEF. The Agreement will set out in detail the conditions of the grant. They can make reference to the terms and conditions set out in the Agreement currently in force in the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk).

Applicants will be required to play an active role in project monitoring and self-evaluation. They are also required to participate actively in the promotion, publicity and dissemination activities organised or facilitated by the QEF.

Electronic Project Management System (EPMS)

27. Q: Where can applicants access EPMS?

A: Applicants can click on the ‘EPMS’ icon in the QEF website (http://qef.org.hk) to enter EPMS. Please be reminded that book-marking the EPMS website is not recommended as the URL of EPMS may change from time to time.

28. Q: What information and document should applicants prepare before registration?

A: Applicants should have all the personal information, contacts and organisation particulars ready when creating their user account. For new 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 of Hong Kong or their status as a permanent resident in Hong Kong, whichever is applicable.

29. Q: If applicants are school teachers responsible for submitting applications for their schools and don’t have the school account, do they need to create a new user account for submission?

A: No, applicants have to use the official user account which the QEF has mailed to their school principal. Individual teachers should not create a new account for their school as they are not entitled to register on behalf of the school authority.

30. Q: Is it complicated to use EPMS to submit applications? Can applicants rectify some errors during or after submission?
A: The EPMS has been designed to be user-friendly with step-by-step instructions. Users can also try out using EPMS on the Trial Website at http://trial.qef-epms.edb.gov.hk/ESC_TRIAL/.

If applicants do not wish to complete their applications in one-go or wish to check the applications again before submission, they can save their uncompleted applications by pressing the “Save” button at the bottom of page. When all the required information is ready, they can login EPMS again to submit their applications. 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.

As applications can be made all year round, applicants should take time to verify all information before submitting their applications.

QEF Secretariat
May 2018