RGC announces funding results of Areas of Excellence Scheme and Theme-based Research Scheme 2023/24

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Research Grants Council (RGC) announced today (July 13) the funding results of the Areas of Excellence (AoE) Scheme 2023/24 (Eleventh Round) and the Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS) 2023/24 (Thirteenth Round).

Two outstanding research proposals were awarded a total funding of around $132 million under the AoE Scheme. As for the TRS, a total of nine research proposals were awarded, six of which were provided with a five-year budget totalling $315 million, and the remaining three potentially groundbreaking and highly original projects were provided with a one-year exploratory funding totalling $20 million for yielding preliminary results. The lists of the awarded projects are set out in Annexes I and II respectively.

The Chairman of the RGC, Professor Wong Yuk-shan, said, "I am delighted to announce the successful completion of the AoE Scheme and the TRS 2023/24. After rigorous peer reviews that are based on academic merits, two outstanding projects in the areas of antenna technology and sustainable development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area were selected for funding under the AoE Scheme. The project teams of these two projects demonstrated strong potential in developing their cutting-edge research into areas of excellence. The RGC also decided to fund nine projects important for Hong Kong's long-term development under the TRS. These projects cover a wide range of research areas relevant to our daily lives, including vascular disease, nasopharyngeal carcinoma, fatty liver disease, tropical-storm-resilient system, landslide emergency risk management, regulation of digital assets, smart city, quantum sensing technology and integrated circuits. We look forward to the lasting economic and societal impacts these projects will bring locally, nationally and internationally.

"The RGC introduced two new grand challenge topics, namely 'Quantum Technology' and 'Integrated Circuits', for this TRS exercise. I am particularly pleased to note that a proposal has been awarded under each of the two new topics. In addition, the project team which was awarded with exploratory funding last year obtained important research results on nasopharyngeal carcinoma, and has been further granted a five-year budget this year. The exploratory funding was introduced to support high-risk yet potentially groundbreaking research. The successful outcome of the said exploratory project shows that the initiative is bearing fruit. Building on this success, the RGC allocated a total of $20 million to fund three exploratory projects in the areas of fatty liver disease, regulation of digital assets and quantum sensing technology this year. We look forward to

yet another round of fruitful results from the project teams.

"The most encouraging results of this year's AoE Scheme and TRS demonstrate that with Hong Kong's positioning as an international innovation and technology centre, and our solid foundation in scientific research, the RGC and our universities continue to leverage our strengths to serve the needs of our country and Hong Kong."

Professor Wong expressed his gratitude to the panel members and non-local experts for their valuable contributions to the assessment process, as well as local researchers for their continued support to the AoE Scheme, the TRS and the RGC's work.

Details of the approved projects for the 2023/24 exercise are available on the RGC website (AoE Scheme: www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/aoe/funded_research/aoe11.html and TRS: www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/rgc/funding_opport/trs/funded_research/trs13.html) for reference. A call for proposals for the AoE Scheme and the TRS 2024/25 will be issued later this month.