

National Education Examinations Authority of China & British Council Management Principles for English Assessment Research Grants Scheme

I. General Provisions

Article One: In accordance with ‘Memorandum of Understanding on CSE Linking Project Extension Programme’ as signed by the National Education Examinations Authority, Ministry of Education, P. R. China (hereafter ‘NEEA’). and the British Council (hereafter ‘BC’), both parties are to jointly set up and fund the NEEA-BC English Assessment Research Grants Scheme. The scheme aims to provide funding to researchers inside and outside China to conduct research on English language assessment to promote the development of English language assessment research, and to encourage cooperation and communication between Chinese and overseas professionals, as well as to promote the reform and development of English education.

Article Two: Adhering to the principles of openness and impartiality, the management of the Research Grants Scheme stresses both quality assurance and innovation, and adopts the working mechanisms like needs-oriented funding, open application, expert panel review, merit-based project selection, procedural quality control and results evaluation.

Article Three: NEEA and BC shall guide and manage the research activities of the scheme on the basis of the joint administrative authority established by the consultation process. The management principles were developed by both sides.

II. Launch of the Grant Schemes and Application for Funding

Article Four: NEEA and BC are to jointly publish the call for English Assessment Research Grants Scheme applications.

Article Five: There will be three project levels: international cooperation projects, key projects and general projects. The amount of funding at each level is ¥150,000(RMB yuan, hereafter), ¥40,000 and ¥20,000 respectively. The international cooperation project is mainly open to Chinese and overseas joint research teams. Research projects are required to be completed within two years, and not exceeding three years if extended.

Article Six: This scheme is open to researchers and teachers from Chinese and overseas universities, research institutes and examination organisations. The applicants should meet the following requirements.

1. The applicants are expected to have expertise in English language assessment research and the ability to carry out and complete the research independently.

2. The research team of the international cooperation project should be composed of members from both China and other countries or regions, and the overseas researchers should undertake substantive research responsibilities within this group.

Article Seven: NEEA and BC are to jointly publish the call for proposals via their official websites. The applicants are required to complete an online application and submit relevant materials according to the requirements.

Article Eight: Each applicant, as the project lead, can only submit one project proposal.

Article Nine: The institution that each applicant is working with is expected to verify and sign off the applicant's application documents, to provide necessary facilities and conditions for research, and to take responsibilities for the research project management and reputational risks.

Article Ten: NEEA and BC will provide necessary advice and technical support during the application process. The application process does not involve any fees.

III. Proposal Review and Approval

Article Eleven: The proposal review activities include preliminary review and expert panel review. The preliminary review mainly verifies the applicant's institutional support, qualifications, the completeness of the proposal, and the research topic. The applications passing the preliminary review will be then reviewed by an expert panel jointly organised by NEEA and BC. According to the principles of fairness and impartiality, the expert panel will select the projects to be funded at the three different levels, based on a unified and consistent evaluation standard.

Article Twelve: The review panel experts are to be selected from experts recommended by NEEA and BC. The reviewers should be familiar with the content and subject of the research, have a strong sense of academic ethics and accomplishments, and have relevant research proposal evaluation experience.

Article Thirteen: The basic standards of suitable proposals include:

1. The proposal is of important theoretical value or practical significance, with a close connection to the reform and development of educational examinations and English assessment, and with an innovation- and future-orientated approach;
2. The research aims are expected be appropriate; the research concept shall be clear; the research approach shall be appropriate; and the argumentation shall be comprehensive;
3. The project lead and research team are expected to have a demonstrable professional research background, and have the necessary time and institutional support to complete

the research;

4. The research implementation is expected to be feasible. The anticipated aims shall be attainable, and the budget shall be reasonably arranged.

Article Fourteen: According to unified review criteria, the review panel will rate each proposal anonymously and conduct cross-examination, of research topics, research content, research methods, the underlying research foundation, and feasibility. The shortlist shall be determined according to the ranking of the total score from all reviewers. The final list of accepted research projects and the level of the funding will be determined following collective discussion and comprehensive reviewing.

Article Fifteen: The final list of accepted research projects will be publicised for no less than 10 working days after being approved by the Scheme Steering Committee.

Article Sixteen: BC and NEEA will notify the results of the funding application and the relevant requirements in the form of written notification to the project leads and their affiliated institution. The project leads shall confirm whether to undertake the research project before the deadline; an overdue response shall be deemed as abandonment of the research proposal.

IV. Process Management

Article Seventeen: A governance mechanism of the research process is expected be implemented by the project lead. The research lead is responsible for organising all research activities and implementing the research plan according to the Management Principles of the Scheme.

Article Eighteen: After receiving the proposal acceptance notification, the project lead shall determine the specific implementation plan as soon as possible, and organise the research opening meeting within two months. The international cooperation project and key project should take the form of a formal meeting. If the main researchers of the international cooperation projects are not in China, they can also take the form of conference call. As for the general projects, they may take the form of either formal meetings or tele-conferences. The research opening meeting shall be demonstrated and guided by 3-5 experts.

Article Nineteen: After the research opening meeting, the opening report (paper and electronic) shall be submitted. The opening report shall include the report on the implementation plan, research progress, feasibility study, etc., as well as the list of experts and their opinions.

Article Twenty: NEEA and BC will organise mid-term review according to the progress of each

research project. The project lead shall submit the interim summary report and relevant results (paper and electronic) as required.

Article Twenty-One: Any of the following circumstances in the course of the study is considered as a major change of the research project. An application for change shall be submitted in written form by the project lead, confirmed by his or her affiliated institution and approved by NEEA and BC:

1. Changing the project lead;
2. Changing the title of the project or the main research content;
3. Changing the form of final results;
4. Changing the affiliated institution of the project;
5. Postponing project completion time by more than six months;
6. Suspending or requesting to cancel the project for some reason.

Without permission, the above changes will mean that the project will not be concluded.

Article Twenty-Two: In case of any of the following circumstances, project funding will be revoked, and the funding will be recovered as appropriate. Additionally, the project lead shall not apply for new funding from NEEA and/or BC within 3 years:

1. Conduct profit-making or fraud in the name of the project;
2. Change the project lead or the main research content without prior approval;
3. The research results are identified as having potential serious political implications or are of poor academic quality;
4. Plagiarism of others' research results or any academic misconduct being identified;
5. Serious violation of financial discipline or any misuse of the funding;
6. Failure to pass the first mid- or final review, and failure to pass the second review even after modification;
7. Failure to submit an application for extension within the time limit, or failure to complete the research after the expiration of the extension.

V. Funding Management

Article Twenty-Three: When applying for a project, the project lead shall prepare a budget with reference to the amount of funding. After approval, the expenditure plan can be adjusted according to the approved funding amount.

Article Twenty-Four: The project funding, once approved, will be paid in phases, accounted for separately and will not be used for other purposes. The project lead can apply for additional project support funds based on actual needs of the research and the research policy of the overseeing institution.

Article Twenty-Five: The research funds will be paid in three phases: 30% of the funds will be paid within one month after the project is accepted; 40% of the funds will be paid after passing the mid-term review; and the remaining 30% will be disbursed after passing the final project review.

Article Twenty-Six: The expenditure of research funds includes: expenses for materials, data collection, meeting and travel, expert consultancy, printing and publication, labour cost, as well as project management fees. The funding shall not be used to cover labour costs of the project members, but they can be used for covering the costs of postgraduate or temporary personnel.

Article Twenty-Seven: The daily expenses and reimbursement procedures of the project funds shall be carried out according to the relevant financial regulations of the overseeing institution.

Article Twenty-Eight: After the completion of the project, the final project financial statement shall be reported to NEEA and BC promptly once the funding clearing and settlement procedures are completed.

Article Twenty-Nine: After the settlement of the project, if there is any funding remaining, it shall be returned to NEEA and BC promptly. In the event that the research is suspended or withdrawn, the following funding allocation will not be paid, and the remaining funding shall be returned to the account of the funding institution.

VI. Review and Conclusion

Article Thirty: After the project is completed on schedule, the results will need to pass the final review to be concluded.

Article Thirty-One: Research results include books, papers (sets), conference papers, policy advisory reports, technical reports, examination standards, software, databases, patents and other forms.

Article Thirty-Two: All research results of the project should be marked with the “NEEA – BC English Assessment Research Grant Scheme”.

Article Thirty-Three: The basic requirements of the final outcome of the project are:

1. Projects at the international cooperation level are required to present one paper in an international academic conference (such as LTRC, AALA, TESOL, CALTA, or New Directions, etc.) and publish one paper in an international journal (e.g. journals in SCI, SSCI Directories),

or two papers in the journals among the China CSSCI Journal Directory (including the expanded journals directory) or key academic journals among Peking University Library Journal Catalogue as alternative;

2. Projects at the key level are required to publish two papers in the journal among China CSSCI Journal Directory (including the expanded journals directory) or key academic journals among Peking University Library Journal Catalogue;
3. Projects at the general level are required to publish two papers in the academic journals in China;
4. The project lead is required to be the primary author or independent author of at least one representative work (i.e. article, paper);
5. The research report is expected to be no less than 20,000 characters; the briefing report shall be 5,000 words or more.

Article Thirty-Four: All projects shall complete the “English Assessment Research Result Approval Form”, and submit the final report, briefing report and the original project results (e.g. books, papers, reports, etc.).

Article Thirty-Five: The final project review could take the form of a meeting review or a correspondence review. The international cooperation projects and key projects shall take the form of a meeting review. The general projects can take either the form of a meeting review or a correspondence review. If the general projects take the form of a correspondence review, the project lead’s institution shall be entrusted to undertake the reviewing work.

Article Thirty-Six: The review panel experts in each project usually consist of 3-5 people. The review panel experts will be recommended by the project team. Panel experts shall have senior professional and technical titles, be familiar with the research field, and possess excellent professional ethics and academic literacy. The panel expert shall not be a member of a project team, and shall take the initiative to avoid any direct interest.

Article Thirty-Seven: On the basis of careful reading of the research results, the panel experts shall provide objective, impartial and comprehensive reviewing feedback on the project results according to the research objectives stated in the project application. For the project adopting the meeting review method, the panel group shall determine whether the project passes the review, and gives their written review feedback. For the correspondence review, the panel group shall provide review feedback and then the project lead’s institution will determine whether the project passes the review.

Article Thirty-Eight: Subject to one of the following circumstances, exemption from review can

be applied for:

1. The project achievement obtains the national level award in China or in the UK;
2. The proposed policy recommendations, standards, regulations, or developed software and databases are adopted and recognised by the Ministry of Education of China, NEEA or BC, with the verification documents;
3. Research project related papers are published in journals among SCI, SSCI, CSSCI directories and other core periodicals: the international cooperation projects - five or more; key projects - three or more; and general projects two or above.

In applying for exemption from review, when completing the 'English Assessment Research Result Approval Form', the reasons shall be stated, and the final report, briefing report, and original documents of published achievements shall be provided.

Article Thirty-Nine: NEEA and BC are solely responsible for the final review of the project results. All projects passing the prior meeting review and correspondence review shall submit the 'English Assessment Research Result Approval Form', final report, briefing report and original copy of the results (e.g. articles, papers, reports, etc.) to NEEA and BC. NEEA and BC will invite the external experts to blind review the projects and determine whether to conclude the project.

Article Forty: The projects that are successful in passing the meeting or correspondence review, and the final blind review by NEEA and BC, will be rewarded the certification of "NEEA-BC English Assessment Research Grants Scheme" signed by NEEA and BC.

VII. Publicity and Promotion

Article Forty-One: NEEA and BC have the right to use and promote the project results. The project lead has the authorship of the project results.

Article Forty-Two: The accepted projects will be posted on NEEA and BC websites. They will also be promoted in offline activities, such as workshops, academic conferences and on language assessment community websites and email forums, such as LTEST-L, etc.

Article Forty-Three: Apart from those unsuitable to be made public, the research project results passing the final reviews will be actively publicised and promoted in various forms, including but not limited to:

1. Research results with decision-making references and practical guidance shall be submitted to the relevant leadership and supervisory departments in a timely manner;
2. Organising and holding lectures or academic seminars for promotion and exchange;
3. Selecting outstanding research results and providing support for the financing and publication of monographs and symposiums, etc.

VIII. Supplementary Provisions

Article Forty-Four: These Management Principles shall be interpreted by NEEA and BC, and shall be effective as of the date of issuance.