

Guideline for Project Application at Research Center for Low-Altitude Economy

March 2025

1. Overview

The Research Centre for Low Altitude Economy (RCLAE) aims to leverage low-altitude airspace to promote large-scale commercial transportation, logistics, industrial service, photography, and other flight activities in Hong Kong and beyond. RCLAE encourages research collaboration between RCLAE members and with researchers from local and overseas universities in LAE. RCLAE provides pump-priming seed funds to support novel and interdisciplinary research with great potential for significant external grants. Applicants should specify a timeline for planned research tasks and external sources of funding applications derived from the outcomes of this scheme.

2. Scope and priorities

The proposals should focus on the recognized niche areas of RCLAE:

- a) Infrastructure Planning
- b) Low Altitude airspace design
- c) Operation design
- d) Reliable perception approach
- e) Robust control technology
- f) Safe flight in an emergency
- g) Novel and promising applications of UAV technologies
- h) Other LAE relevant topics

3. Selection criteria

- a) The academic merits and scientific significance
- b) The potential impact made on PolyU and society
- c) The viability of the proposal, particularly in terms of its interdisciplinary collaboration and project management. Genuine cross-department and interdisciplinary collaboration is strongly encouraged.
- d) The potential to develop into subsequent large collaborative projects and to secure external large research grants.

4. Funding plan

We plan to fund 4 types of projects of different sizes and durations.

1. **Application/platform projects.** The maximum financial support from RCLAE is 500,000 HKD per project. The maximum period is for two years. This type of project is application driven and it is expected that demonstration and prototyping systems will be developed in the end of the project. It aims to enhance PolyU's capability in LAE and showcase to stakeholders including the public, the government and potential collaborators.

2. **Fundamental research projects.** The maximum financial support from RCLAE is 300,000 HKD per project. The maximum period is for two years. This type of project focuses on addressing research and technology challenges arising in the development and deployment of LAE. Expected to deliver high-quality publications, to secure competitive external funds, such as GRF, ITF, and industry collaborations.
3. **Exploratory projects.** The initial financial support from RCLAE is 150,000 HKD per project. The type of project could last from 6-12 months. It is possible to extend a funded project after the assessment of its progress and potential. This type of project is designated for creative and adventurous ideas. Early career academics are particularly welcome.
4. **Reward of excellence projects.** For a large external grant, 10% of the awarded budget associated with RCLAE will be provided by RCLAE (capped at 300,000 HKD). This type of project is to encourage PolyU's members to apply for large external research grant and to show the recognition of members' achievement in securing external research grants.

For application and fundamental research projects, the financial support will be made in two installments. The first payment will be made at the beginning of the project. The second could be made at the beginning of the second phase of the project if the progress is satisfactory. Please factor this arrangement into your research and budget planning.

5. Assessment at the end of projects

The RCLAE Assessment Panel will evaluate the performance of each awarded project based on, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- ✓ The extent to which the objectives are addressed/achieved
- ✓ Success in knowledge transfer
- ✓ The outcomes and impacts created
- ✓ The interdisciplinary/international/industrial collaborations promoted
- ✓ The synergy that has been brought about
- ✓ Research awards and recognitions related to the research conducted
- ✓ Joint publication bearing the RCLAE name (with RCLAE as an affiliation of the authors) and the acknowledgment of the financial support of RCLAE
- ✓ External funds to be resulted in by the project and the amount to be counted into RCLAE

6. Requirements on the awarded projects

1. Project teams are required to submit annual progress reports and completion reports according to the schedule set out by RCLAE.
2. For the outcomes of the funded projects, project teams must add RCLAE as an affiliation, in addition to their home departments
3. Project teams must acknowledge the financial support of RCLAE in their publications, e.g., "This project is supported by the Research Centre for Low-Altitude Economy via the project [project number]".
4. The teams of supported projects are strongly encouraged to apply for external

grants. When successful, the PI should credit the projects to RCLAE within PGMS for the sustainability of the RC.

5. RCLAE plans to organize workshops and other relevant activities to showcase the achievements of the supported projects. Project teams supported by RCLAE must join these activities and present their achievements.

7. Submission of proposals and enquires

Please submit your proposal using the designed application form directly to RCLAE at info.rclae@polyu.edu.hk by **28th April 2025**.