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Hong Kong's postgraduate research landscape is aiming to move on to the world stage with a new initiative designed to attract top international postgraduate research students to the territory for their doctoral studies.

International Fellowships offered by the Research Grants Council (RGC), the semi-autonomous advisory arm of the University Grants Committee (UGC) plans to target top-flight international students to undertake their postgraduate studies in Hong Kong. The program is part of the RGC's focus to produce research postgraduate students who will excel in their chosen fields and possess a broad knowledge base to cope with the challenges of a changing world.

Under the Fellowship scheme targeting international students, a total of 135 PhD students will be recruited annually to Hong Kong on a worldwide basis. Currently the higher education sector in Hong Kong provides an annual intake of about 1,135 PhD students.

RGC Chairman, Professor Roland Chin said the main objective of the Fellowship scheme is to broaden the breadth and depth of Hong Kong's postgraduate learning environment and raise global awareness of Hong Kong's attractiveness as a key research hub. "The Fellowship program aims to improve research quality and to provide cultural diversity and a rich research environment. The program will also add a new dimension through communication and the exchange of research experiences," said Professor Chin.

He said the Fellowship scheme would be coordinated by the RGC but student recruitment would be spearheaded by professors and their universities. The first Fellowship students are expected to arrive in Hong Kong to begin their postgraduate studies in 2010. "There are no targeted disciplines or research areas, we simply want to attract outstanding postgraduate

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students" said Professor Chin adding that Hong Kong offers a English-language multi-cultural learning environment, world-class professors and excellent research facilities.

He said Hong Kong's close proximity to the mainland offers another significant advantage for those interested in China-related research. "Anyone interested in China studies or high-tech manufacturing, for examples would find Hong Kong the ideal place to conduct their studies," said Professor Chin.

Professor Chin said the RGC is optimistic the scheme will attract top students. In order to be competitive with other universities an attractive stipend will include a travel allowance to attend conferences and seminars.

Professor Chin said the benefits to Hong Kong society could be many. For instance, in the form of increased research that helps to create, disseminate and transfer knowledge. Research could also help Hong Kong to build on existing strengths and generate new high-impact initiatives. "After graduation those who choose to stay and work in Hong Kong could benefit the community directly, while those who go elsewhere could become important ambassadors for Hong Kong," said Professor Chin. He said over time the program would also help put Hong Kong on the map as a center of excellence.

The scheme is being funded as part of a new fund, announced in the 2008-09 Budget by the Financial Secretary, and seen as an important step to enhance research support in the higher education sector to fulfill Hong Kong's aspiration of further developing world-class universities.

"This is a starting point and the first step in sending a message to the rest of the world that Hong Kong offers many attractive reasons for undertaking postgraduate research work," said Professor Chin.

Professor Chin said presently Hong Kong is not on the radar screens of postgraduate students, but this could change with concerted marketing and awareness initiatives. For example, the RGC plans to stage a series of roadshows, attend education fairs and promote the scheme through education agencies. "In a few years time we hope to be in a position to be able to brand the prestigious fellowship," said Professor Chin.

**Professor Roland Chin**  
*Chairman, Research Grants Council*