



UCL - Tohoku University Strategic Partner Funds 2025-26

The Office of the Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation, Global Engagement) at University College London (UCL) and Tohoku University (TU) are contributing matching funds to support collaborative education and research initiatives through a joint call for proposals for the development of collaborative activities.

1. Projects

This call invites proposals for partnership development activity in areas of mutual interest and complementary strengths that will deepen collaboration between UCL and TU. Proposals should be co-led by a Lead Applicant at each institution and can involve a wider team of participants from each institution, as appropriate to the activities proposed.

Proposals from all fields are welcome but those related to the following fields are particularly encouraged:

- a. Resilient Society
- b. Neuroscience
- c. AI and Machine Learning in Health
- d. Social Innovation
- e. Quantum

Applications must demonstrate how the proposed activity will provide a platform for longer-term, larger-scale collaboration between UCL and TU in the relevant field, for example, by providing a basis for ongoing joint research and education activity and / or applications to external bodies for research grant funding.

Up to six joint projects will be selected for funding. Proposals will be assessed by a committee composed of members from both institutions. If the funds are for a related or follow-up activity, applicants should explain how the proposed project (which is the subject of the new application) builds on previous outcomes.

2. Eligibility for UCL participants within the scope of this call

- Applications are open to UCL staff members with the following roles. Applications from [Early Career Researchers](#), or staff with equivalent professional training, are welcomed:
 - a. Professor or equivalent
 - b. Associate Professor/ Reader or equivalent
 - c. Senior Lecturer/Principal Researcher/Principal Research Associate or equivalent
 - d. Lecturer/Senior Research Associate or equivalent
 - e. Post Doc/Researcher/Research Associate or equivalent
- Applicants from UCL must have an open-ended UCL contract or a fixed-term contract which lasts until at least July 2026.
- Applicants are not required to have a doctorate to apply but do need to hold a role at one of the levels described above.
- PhD students are not eligible to apply but are eligible to take part in the project.

- UCL Professional Service & VP Office staff are not eligible to apply but can take part in the project where this supports the aims and objectives.
- Please note that in order to increase the reach and breadth of access across UCL to the 25/26 Global Engagement funding schemes (the Global Engagement Funds (GEF) and Partner Funds) the following rules are in place for UCL applicants:
 - a. You can submit a maximum of two proposals across these funding streams, either as a lead applicant or co-applicant. For example, you could submit 1 GEF proposal and 1 partner proposal, or 2 GEF proposals, or 2 partner proposals.
 - b. You can receive a maximum of 1 award per scheme as a lead applicant. For example, you could receive 1 GEF award and/or 1 partner award.
 - c. If you were the lead applicant of a proposal that received GE seed funding in 24/25, you cannot apply as a lead applicant for any 25/26 GE seed funding schemes, but you will be eligible for the 26/27 schemes. A special exception can be made where there is strong potential for significant impact and/or scaling up of collaboration with a global partner based on the outcomes of 24/25 project activity. Please contact us if you feel this applies to your activity.
 - d. Please note: If you have already submitted 2 applications to the 25/26 GE seed funding schemes (launched in Spring 2025), either as a lead applicant or a co-applicant, you cannot apply to this funding scheme. Additionally, if you have already received an award from one of the 25/26 GE partner funding schemes, you are not eligible to apply.

3. Collaboration Activities

Funding can support a broad range of activities as appropriate to the aims and objectives of the collaboration. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Joint seminar(s)/workshop(s) with UCL & TU partners (remotely or in person) which might lead to joint publications, future research collaborations, grant applications, or other follow-up activity. Funding may be used for external services required to facilitate the event, e.g. professional moderation or technical support.
- Meetings, or preliminary scoping work and baseline research/data gathering, to underpin the preparation of a long-term collaborative partnership (e.g. preparation of a PhD summer school, double degree, future exchange agreement, etc).
- Stipends for research assistant and interns. UCL student casual wage costs for working on the collaboration can be covered, as can travel, accommodation and subsistence essential to the activity, in line with UCL's expense policy, sustainability agenda and coronavirus guidance. Please note that teaching buyouts are not eligible.
- Applicants are advised to consider the environmental impact of proposed activity and international travel and to conduct meetings online as far as possible

4. What cannot be funded by the UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds?

- Activity which does not involve UCL & TU partners; work for which there is already a significant existing funding stream; activity that has already happened.
- Costings should be appropriate and relevant to the activity, for example the provision of alcoholic beverages for partners is not considered a valuable use of funds, unless it can be described how hospitality is critical for the building of this relationship or necessary/culturally significant for an event e.g. a public exhibition.
- Items which are already covered by an existing research or teaching grant.

- A Worktribe costing for UCL applicants is NOT necessary for UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds.
- Teaching time buyout cannot be funded.

5. Value and Duration

Up to six successful proposals will receive up to £10,000. Funding will be jointly provided by UCL and TU, with 50% going to the academic at each respective institution. **However, only one proposal should be submitted through the link included in point 7.**

Please note that British and Japanese universities have different financial years, and this will have an impact on the funding schedule. **Funds provided by UCL must be spent by 31 July 2026 (activities for which the funds are allocated must take place before 31 July 2026), whereas funds provided by TU must be spent by 31 March 2027.** Applicants should take this into account when planning their proposed activity. Further, the allocation of the funds from TU is subject to the conditions that at least 50% of the fund should be used for international travel.

6. Timeline

Call for Proposals	1 September 2025
Deadline for Submission of Proposal	11:59pm (UK time) on 10 October 2025
Communication of Results to Applicants	By the end of November 2025
Start date of Awards (UCL)	From December 2025
Start date of Awards (TU)	From April 2026

7. Submission of Proposals

Proposals are to be prepared and submitted jointly using the application form which can be found on [the portal](#). **The proposal must be submitted by the lead-UCL academic by 3 October 2025.**

Proposals must be submitted to UCL at the following link:

<https://form.jotform.com/geoucl/ucltohoku202526>

8. UCL and TU Research Ethical approval and Research Security

Please check the guidelines regarding research ethics and research security ahead of submitting your proposal. You should also consider if your activity may be subject to Export Controls. Both universities' applicants are responsible for reading these guidelines and ensuring projects adhere to both universities' policy and process. As with all funding schemes, we strongly advise applicants to undertake proportionate and appropriate due diligence, relative to the stage and scope of the research collaboration.

UCL's ethical research, research security and export control guidelines can be found here:

- [UCL Research Ethics Service](#)
- [Overseas Research Roadmap](#)
- [Export Controls](#)

TU's research ethics and security export control guidelines can be found here: Please check your department's ethics guidelines.

- [Research Ethics \(in Japanese only\)](#)
- [Security Export Control \(in Japanese only\)](#)

9. Adjudication

Proposals are received by UCL's Global Engagement team and forwarded to TU for separate review at each institution. The joint committee will convene to select the successful proposals.

Selection Criteria: Both internal review committees will assess each proposal according to the following criteria:

- Project design and rationale:** how clearly presented and justified is the design and basis for the collaboration?
- Project impact:** how clearly linked are the outcomes to the planned activities and performance indicators, such as joint papers, external funding applications, joint research with industry and proposals for policy recommendations?
- Impact of collaboration:** is there a distinct advantage provided by this collaboration that is not possible by the two institutions working individually?
- Capacity for future collaboration:** to what extent are future collaborations possible as a result of the proposed exchange activities?

10. Communication of Results

Final results will be announced by means of a communication to the lead applicants.

11. Joint Research Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to fill in the project summary as part of the research agreement.

12. Reporting After Project Completion

All awardees must, as a condition of receiving an award under this call, complete a narrative report of achievements (of between 1 and 2 pages).

13. Queries & contacts

If you experience any problems making an online application or have any questions about the UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds, please contact UCL's Keiko Tsunekawa, Global Engagement Manager at UCL: k.tsunekawa@ucl.ac.uk or the Global Strategy Office at TU: kokusai-c@grp.tohoku.ac.jp, depending on your affiliation.