



Tohoku-Chula Strategic Partnership Award for Research Collaboration Request for Proposals and Guidelines for Applicants

**Deadline for Applications:
21 August 2026, 17:00 (Bangkok) / 19:00 (Japan)**

Purpose and Priorities

Tohoku University (TU) and Chulalongkorn University (Chula) have identified each other as strategic partners to foster deep collaborations in research and education.

TU-Chula Strategic Partnership Award for Research Collaboration (SPARC) are intended to provide TU and Chula faculty teams with initial financial support for collaborative research explorations with the potential to create new or expanded research partnerships, develop cutting-edge scholarship to create academic and societal impact, and attract external funding.

These international research exploration seed grants will help support early-stage research projects or capacity-building efforts to create and sustain long-term collaborations and secure extramural funding.

Applicants may propose new partnerships to explore and develop research collaborations, including organizing initial meetings and workshops and/or establishing research infrastructure for gathering preliminary data to develop a research idea (e.g., feasibility, pilot, and proof-of-concept studies) that may result in joint publications and enable subsequent applications for external funding. Alternately, applicants may expand an existing partnership if the research project explores new directions or aims at capacity-building and requires further development to attract future funding. Proposals should be sustainable in the long-term with a plan for engagement that includes the details for sustainable external funding and publication outputs.

We invite proposals from researchers **in all disciplines** at TU and Chula. In this round, up to five (5) proposals will be funded (each with two Principal Investigators: one from TU and one from Chula). Each successful proposal may receive funding up to the equivalent of JPY 1,800,000 / THB 400,000 (with TU contributing JPY 900,000 and Chula contributing THB 200,000). Each Institution's contributions will be used exclusively to fund its own researcher and their research expenses and will not be comingled. The award of any funds from either Institution will be subject, in each case, to the internal processes and procedures of such Institution.

1. Eligibility

- 1.1. Applications are open to any TU-eligible Principal Investigator and Chula-eligible Principal Investigator. Each grant requires at least one PI from TU and one PI from Chula. Additional collaborators are welcome but not required. In this round, **no specific themes are prioritized** for the research grants.
- 1.2. The two University Principal Investigators must meet Universities' PI eligibility criteria as follows: Principal Applicants on each side must be tenure-track or tenured faculty member or permanent / fixed-term academic staff of Chula and Tohoku. Adjunct/Honorary staff members whose home university is neither Chula nor Tohoku are not eligible to be lead-investigators but can be listed as further co-investigators.
- 1.3. Graduate students, post-docs, and research assistants/associates are not eligible to apply as Principal Investigators, but they are welcome to join the applications.

- 1.4. Projects already funded by a SPARC are not eligible for funding in subsequent years. Grantees who have received funding within the past year and wish to be considered for subsequent grant funding might be considered only in highly exceptional situations and if they are proposing completely new activities and/or substantial enhancements to the initial project.

2. Duration

Funding should be expended between 1 October 2026 and 30 September 2027 at Chula, and (1) between 1 October 2026 and 31 March 2027 and (2) between 1 April 2027 and 30 September 2027 at TU, due to the different financial years of Chula and TU.

3. Important Dates

Applications open	12 June 2026
Applications close	21 August 2026, 17:00 (Bangkok) / 19:00 (Japan)
Successful applicants notified	29 September 2026
Earliest day for projects to start	1 October 2026
Latest date for projects to end	30 September 2027
Final reports due	By 31 October 2027

4. Budget and Justification

Proposal budget, submitted using the provided template, should be appropriate, realistic, and reasonable for the work proposed. Budget justification should clearly demonstrate the need for this seed grant and how the requested funds will initiate new or expanded collaborations, enable proposed activities, and help build towards future external funding.

Eligible Grant Activities/Costs

Activity/Cost	TU	Chula
Travel expenses: Airfare (economy class), train, rental car, lodging, meals, visas, etc.	eligible	eligible
Costs for hosting seminars/conferences or workshops (e.g., venue rental, catering, lodging, etc.)	eligible	eligible
Conference registration (related to collaborative research)	eligible	eligible
Consumable materials and supplies	eligible	eligible
Publications and printing (related to collaborative research)	eligible	eligible
Hiring graduate and/or undergraduate students to assist with research project: Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) summer appointment stipends or student hourly employment at TU and/or Chula	eligible	eligible
General teaching or instructional programs	not eligible	not eligible
Salaries, salary supplementation, and benefits for faculty, staff, and post-docs, including effort for faculty in soft-money positions, teaching buyout	not eligible	not eligible
Stipend payments to non-TU, non-Chula individuals	not eligible	not eligible
Student scholarships	not eligible	not eligible
Website development	not eligible	not eligible
Mobile phone cards	not eligible	not eligible
Entertainment costs	not eligible	not eligible
Computers, laptops, printers, standard software, basic computing accessories (access to high-performance computers or other specialized applications that are justified by the project are allowed)	eligible	not eligible
Indirect costs (non-required for this grant)	not eligible	not eligible

All travel activities must comply with the guidelines of the respective universities:

- **TU**
 - TU faculty and staff members shall be issued travel orders in accordance with the TU Travel Expenses Regulations, with the relevant procedures being executed by the section responsible for the PI's affiliation.
- **Chula**
 - Chula faculty and staff are required to submit a request for approval to travel abroad to the authorized person who can consider, consent, and sign the approval form.
 - **Travel Policy:**
 - Chulalongkorn Announcement of Financial Management on Criteria and Payment Rates 2020, Unit 7, Part 2

5. Submission Requirements

All proposals must address the selection criteria (see point 6 below) and also include the following elements:

- Project title (30 words max)
- Project research area(s) (15 words max)
- Project abstract (150 words max)
- Project keywords (30 words max)
- Project timeline (Template is provided as part of the online application form)
- Project budget (Template is provided as part of the online application form)

6. Scoring and Selection Criteria

6.1. Criteria do not have weightings; proposals are assessed holistically. Each proposal will be assessed according to the selection criteria described below.

Score	Category	Justification
4	Excellent	Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor
3	Very Good	Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
2	Good	Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
1	Weak	Criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses

Selection Criteria	Description
Quality & Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly describe the objectives and methodology to be employed with the project. The alignment with strategic priorities and the objectives of the funding scheme will be considered in combination with the soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology. (Note: Proposals should use clear writing appropriate for non-specialists and make a strong case for the importance of the project to reviewers outside the discipline. It is strongly advised that the proposals avoid jargon and unexplained abbreviations). • Explain the composition of project team and track record, including short bios for group members, a summary of how individuals' expertise will contribute to achieving the project aims, and highlights from any previous engagement, if applicable. • <i>1000-word maximum</i>

Execution, including sustainability plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborate on the workplan and milestones outlined in the timeframe (there are separate sections in the application form for an outline of activities in the Timeline and Budget). Proposed timeframes and budget estimates should be realistic and appropriate. This section should also address the appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and there are adequate resources in the project to enable them to fulfil that role. Sustainability: The long-term plan for engagement to attract research funding. Proposals must include a specific and concrete plan for how the project will become sustainable. Provide a list of opportunities for future extramural funding to continue the project following the seed grant and elaborate on why the project will be competitive for future external funding. <i>300-word maximum</i>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline what the participants will gain from the project and how it will contribute to the discipline and field of research. Explain how the project will establish or strengthen a durable cooperation between the universities and participants. Explain how the project will impact beyond the academic sphere (i.e., benefit society, address global challenges, etc). Explain how the project activities and results will be communicated to different target audiences (e.g., publications, blogs, events, teaching/training materials, new educational collaborations, policy briefs, external funding bids etc.) <i>300-word maximum</i>

7. Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the selected proposal will result in one or more of the following outcomes:

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	The research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - will advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of importance - may result in fundamental outcomes - is innovative in concept - will use well established approaches to good effect
Publications	At least one (1) referred publication in a nationally/internationally recognised scholarly journal
External funding	At least one (1) national/international competitive grant submission
<i>Optional:</i>	
Training & education	Supervision and mentoring of visiting PhD students/postdoctoral researchers/junior scholars
Joint Workshop	Organise at least one (1) joint workshop at either institution
Conference	At least one (1) conference presentation

8. Assessment Process

Award selection will be made by a joint committee formed by members of both universities, which reserves final authority over the selection of projects taking into account university and faculty strategic priorities, and the availability of funds.

9. Application Submission

- 9.1. All applications must be jointly developed by a Principal Investigator from TU and a Principal Investigator from Chula.
- 9.2. All applications must be submitted to TU and Chula separately:
 - 9.2.1. **TU's PIs** must submit an application and related documents to Global Strategy Office Secretariat (GSO) at kokusai-c@grp.tohoku.ac.jp in either PDF or Word format.
 - 9.2.2. **Chula's PIs** must submit an application and related documents to the Office of International Affairs and Global Network through their respective Dean or Director of Faculty, School, or Institute via Lesspaper.
- 9.3. Only complete submissions will be considered.
- 9.4. Late applications will not be considered.
- 9.6. Only applications submitted to both TU GSO's email address above and Chula's Lesspaper, and before the deadline, will be considered.

10. Notification of Application Outcomes

All applicants will receive a notification of the results from their respective universities. Successful applicants will receive a letter of award outlining the process to accept the award including payment. Feedback on individual applications will not be provided.

11. Change of Investigator

Applicants should contact the Program Coordinator at each institution. Such changes will need to be approved and documented.

12. Forfeiture of Grants

Grants not spent by 30 September 2027 at Chula and at TU must be returned.

13. Financial and Reporting Obligations

The funding should only be used for the approved project and in accordance with the proposal and the budget plan. It must not be used for any other purposes, and prior approval is needed for any variation in the budget items. Request for variations from original proposals must be submitted to both universities.

Awardees must adhere to the purchasing guidelines of the respective universities.

Both Chula and TU recipients must submit a final report by 31 October 2027. In consultation with their Finance Manager, Chula Principal Investigators must complete the acquittal of awarded funds and provide a statement as part of their final report. Failure to submit a completed report will result in all members of the project team being ineligible to submit future funding applications.

The activation of research funding accounts is not tied to ethics/other approvals being obtained. It is the responsibility of Principal Investigators to ensure that no work requiring approval is commenced until such approvals are in place.

14. Marketing and Communications

Recipients may be contacted by TU and Chula for the purposes of promoting their successful funding application and informing others of their research.

15. Publications

Any publications (e.g., abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g., public presentations) arising from activities supported by the TU-Chula SPARC should acknowledge assistance received from the TU-Chula SPARC and

copies or notification should be submitted to Global Strategy Office at TU and the Office of Research Affairs at Chula. The standard acknowledgment is “TU-Chula Strategic Partnership Award for Research Collaboration”.

For further information please contact the Program Coordinators:

Tohoku University Global Strategy Office Secretariat Email: kokusai-c@grp.tohoku.ac.jp Phone: +81 (0)22 217 6311	Chulalongkorn University Office of International Affairs and Global Network Email: grip.oia@chula.ac.th Phone: +66 2218 3124
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