UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds 2023-24

Guideline for Applicants

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

1. **Projects**
   i) This call invites proposals for partnership development activity in areas of mutual interest and complementary strengths that will strengthen collaboration between UCL and TU.
   ii) Proposals must include participants from both institutions.
   iii) Applications from all fields are welcome but proposals related to the following fields will be prioritised:
   - Disaster science
   - Life and Medical Sciences; Population Health; and Brain Sciences, particularly in relation to the Tohoku Medical Megabank Organization (ToMMo)
   - AI
   - Higher Education

   iv) 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.
   v) Up to six joint projects will be selected for funding to a maximum total value of £10,000 per project. Proposals will be assessed by a committee composed of members from both institutions. Previous recipients of UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds may apply again. 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:
     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 2024.
   - 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 their involvement in the delivery of the project – for example as research assistants or interns - is encouraged.
   - 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.

3. Collaboration Activities

Due to high rate of inflation and considered environmental impacts by international travels, it is encouraged to conduct meetings online as much as possible. 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.

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 would normally be included in a research or teaching grant. This seed funding supports and develops UCL & TU collaboration and lacks the scale and resources to support the core components of a research or teaching project.
- Teaching time buyout cannot be funded.
- A Worktribe costing for UCL applicants is NOT necessary for UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds.

4. Value and Duration

Proposals may request funding up to £10,000. Up to six projects will be funded in total. 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 6.**

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 will be available shortly after the award has been made and must be spent by 31 July 2024 (activities for which the funds are allocated must take place before 31 July 2024), whereas funds from TU will be available from 1 April 2024 and must be spent by 31 March 2025. Applicants should take this into account when planning their proposed activity.

5. Timeline

Call for proposals	21 July 2023
Deadline for submission of proposal	6 October 2023
Communication of Results to applicants	31 October 2023
Start date of Awards (UCL)	1 November 2023
Start date of the Awards (TU)	1 April 2024

6. Submission of Proposals

i) Proposals are to be prepared and submitted jointly. Each proposal must be submitted by the lead-UCL academic by 9am UK on Friday 6 October 2023.
Proposals must be submitted to UCL at the following link:
https://eu.jotform.com/build/231874840879371

7. Ethical approval

Please check each university's guidelines regarding research ethics. Applicants are responsible for reading these guidelines and ensuring projects adhere to each university's ethical approval policy and process.

UCL's ethical guidelines can be found here:
- Research Ethics Committee at UCL guidelines
- Overseas Research Roadmap

TU's ethical guidelines can be found here: Please check your department's ethical guidelines.
- Research Ethics (in Japanese only)

8. Adjudication

i) Proposals are received by UCL's Global Engagement team and forwarded to TU for separate review at each institution.
ii) **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** (what is the extent to which future collaborations are possible as a result of the proposed exchange activities.)
iii) A joint committee will convene to select up to six final proposals.

9. Communication of Results

Final results will be announced by means of a communication to the successful faculty members.

10. Joint Research Agreement

Successful applicants will be required to exchange a research agreement signed by their Dean, which will be submitted to TU as per TU's requirement.

11. 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).

12. Queries & contacts

If you experience any problems making an online application, or have any questions about the UCL-TU Strategic Partner Funds, please contact Sophia Hilt, Global Programme Manager (s.hilt@uc.ac.uk) and Keiko Tsunekawa, Global Engagement Manager at UCL (k.tsunekawa@ucl.ac.uk) or Global Engagement Division Coordination Team at TU (kokusai-c@grp.tohoku.ac.jp), depending on your university affiliation.