The University of Manchester, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Stockholm University Joint Research Seed Fund

The University of Manchester (UoM), KTH Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) and Stockholm University (SU) are pleased to announce the fourth round of our joint research seed fund to support collaborative research projects.

The purpose of the fund is to initiate or develop new research partnerships. Funds will be awarded to projects which encourage the building of networks of researchers and have clearly defined plans for future funding.

The proposed collaborative project should present a balance between partnership building activities and direct research, as appropriate, considering the key objectives of the funding opportunity. Projects can include:
- joint research activities: scoping, feasibility, or proof of concept studies
- travel and networking
- exchange visits
- skills training.

Projects that primarily focus on teaching or training will not be eligible.

The Fund is open to applications from all research areas, and we encourage applicants from any discipline to submit proposals. If you are looking for collaborators, please get in touch with us (contact details at the end of the document) and we will help identify researchers with similar interests.

We encourage the involvement of research staff who are Early Career Researchers (ECRs) either as the principal investigators (PIs) or as members of the project team (please check the eligibility list below for other criteria). Please note that PhD researchers are not eligible as PIs/lead researchers.

Proposals will be assessed and recommended for selection by a panel composed of academic staff from all 3 partners.

Background to the fund
This initiative stems out of a series of meetings between the senior leadership teams and an online workshop for academic staff which took place in December 2020. Further workshops were held in Stockholm in April 2022, and six key research areas were identified in which to develop collaborations: digital trust, privacy and security; sustainability and circular economy; molecular biosciences; water; inequalities in higher education and quantum science.

Timeline

Call for proposals opens	**Tuesday 23 September 2025,** 9 am, UK time, 10 am Swedish time.
Deadline for submission	**Monday 10 November 2025,** 5 pm, UK time, 6 pm Swedish time.
Applicants notified	End of December 2025.
Project start date	January 2026.

Funding and project length

- Trilateral proposals (UoM, KTH and SU, with PIs from all three institutions) can access funding from all three institutions.
- Bilateral proposals (UoM with either KTH or SU), with PIs from two institutions, can access funding from those two institutions.

Recipients can be awarded up to:
- 5K GBP from UoM to support UoM applicants
- 60K SEK from KTH to support KTH applicants
- 60K SEK from SU to support SU applicants.

Projects will be funded for a period up to 18 months, starting from January 2026. There is flexibility on start dates, but we would expect all projects to be underway by March 2026 at the latest.

Project scope, costs and eligibility

Applicants and collaborators
- The proposal must be a new collaboration, i.e. the collaborators cannot have joint funding together.
- Each proposal MUST include a lead/PI from UoM and at least one lead/PI from KTH or SU.
- **Proposals must include at least two eligible researchers from each partner institution on the team**. Eligible applicants (see other eligibility details below) may only lead one application but can be listed in the project team on other applications.
- Academic staff members from all disciplines and research areas are welcome to apply. We encourage early-stage/early career researchers (ECRs) to apply. PhD students or academic staff on non-research contracts may be included in the project team but cannot lead a project.
- Applicants do not need to have a permanent post, but they must have an existing research-focused staff contract at the time of application, and that contract must cover the full period of the grant.
- Mutual external collaborators (including researchers from other universities internationally, or those working in non-academic contexts such as industry or government) cannot lead an application but can be involved in the proposed activities at their own expense, where the benefit of their involvement to the collaboration is justified in the proposal.

Project proposals

- Proposals demonstrating strong relevance to strategic priorities at the participating institutions and with the potential for sustainability beyond the initial funding period are encouraged.
- Proposals may include but are not limited to workshops (face-to-face and virtual), symposia, staff exchanges, research seminars/presentations and formation, development of a collaborative network and/or practical pilot or feasibility research activities (such as experiments, surveys, etc.).

Costs and budget

- Eligible costs include travel and subsistence, consumables and the cost of research assistants e.g. PhD students, research associates and technicians which are directly related to the project. Existing staff time including the lead applicants'/PIs' time cannot be costed to the project. The fund does not support equipment, scholarships, conference attendance or tuition fees.
- Each institution will pay funds directly to its researchers. Approval of expenditure will be governed by each university for the portion of funding provided.
- Each institution should pay its own costs and there can be no transfer of funds between institutions. For example, travel costs for UoM staff should be in the UoM budget, costs for subsistence for KTH staff should be allocated in the KTH budget and costs of hosting a workshop at SU, should be costed in the SU budget.
- We ask applicants to take into consideration their institutional policies and guidance around travel. These documents and links are designed to assist colleagues in making informed decisions about travel and, where possible, reduce the university's overall carbon footprint:
  - **UoM:** University Travel Policy, Before Travelling and Travel Decision Tree.
  - **KTH:** Business trip step by step, Guidelines for meetings and travel and Checklist for meetings and travel (appendix 1)
  - **SU:** Travel - Medarbetarwebben
- Only travel to/from Manchester/Stockholm will be funded.
- UoM collaborators – A fEC costing is not required. Please note that only directly incurred costs are allowed and not directly allocated.

Eligible costs	Ineligible costs
• Travel costs including trains, flights, hotels and subsistence • Directly incurred staff e.g. Research Assistant* (up to a maximum of 20% of each institution's budget i.e. £1,000 GBP and 12,000 SEK). • Research costs including consumables (up to a maximum of 20% of each institution's budget i.e. £1,000 GBP and 12,000 SEK) a description of these costs will be required in the application form. • Costs associated with organising workshops and meetings	• Replacement research/teaching costs • Directly allocated costs including applicants' time ** • Indirect costs/estates costs • Equipment • Scholarships • Conference attendance • Tuition fees • Honoraria

Directly incurred and directly allocated costs are terms used by UK funders:

*Directly Incurred costs are project-specific (i.e. they arise as a direct consequence of the project taking place).

** Directly Allocated costs are not project-specific (i.e. they are incurred whether or not the project takes place), and are estimated at project level e.g. Investigator time, Technician time (where not directly incurred).

UoM collaborators - A fEC costing is not required. The budget section of the application is easy to complete and should not require input from Research Services teams. If however, you feel you need support then please follow local Faculty or School procedures for submitting grant applications.

Equality, diversity and inclusion/Gender equality, diversity and equal conditions

Adherence to respective equality, diversity and inclusion/gender equality, diversity and equal conditions policies is an important feature of this scheme to ensure that all participants can do their best work, thrive and succeed. Applicant teams should consider how they can take meaningful steps in their future collaborations to foster an environment that values, supports and respects a diverse range of views, knowledge and experiences.

You can read more about our policies and what they cover here: UoM, KTH and SU.

Submission of Proposals

This is a joint call, and a single application should be submitted online using SmartSurvey. The form can be previewed here.

The form can be completed collaboratively, and applicants should use the 'save and continue' feature to save the form and continue later (a link is sent to the applicant's email address). The link can be shared with collaborators to contribute to the application.

The full proposal is comprised of the following elements:

- **Type of collaboration –** which institutions are part of the project.
- **Applicants' details – affiliations from each institution with contact details**
  - Principle Investigator information (UoM)
  - Principle Investigator information (KTH)
  - Principle Investigator information (SU)
- **Research Proposal – details of the project**
  - **Title:** of the Research Project
  - **Key words** that relate to the main topic of your proposal
  - **What is your project idea – a brief, plain English description of your project** (project design and rationale)**?**
  - **Why is this impactful and important work** (project design and rationale)**?**
  - **Proposed Timeframe** (project design and rationale): project dates, a project timeline and a description of the planned activities.
  - **Collaborator complementarity and impact**: A description of how the proposed activities combine mutual areas of interest and strength and the added value of this combined expertise. Include

any corresponding deliverables, e.g. a publication, blog, a meeting, a report etc. Also include any involvement of early-stage/early career researchers and/or graduate researchers/PhD students and any direct anticipated benefits to those researchers themselves.

- **Potential impact:**
  - **Potential scholarly impact** – a description of the expected academic gains for the project as a result of the proposed cooperation and mobility, and the identification of corresponding performance indicators e.g. a publication, blog, meeting report etc.
  - **Potential broader impact** – a description of how your proposal aligns with the strategic priorities of the participating institutions and the anticipated benefits of the activities to local or international communities.
- **Capacity for future collaboration:**
  - What plans do you have for future funding after the end of the project?
  - What other potential future collaborations and outcomes do you anticipate as a result of having undertaken the current collaboration? For example: joint publications, joint supervision of graduate researchers, joint teaching, growth of research team size at each partner, collaborations with corporate partners.
- **Proposed budget**
  - A breakdown of the cost of the activity e.g. travel, hotels etc.
- **Project team information**
- **Support documents**
  - Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae: (not more than 2 pages) of the leads/PIs with a selected list of publications.
  - A letter of support: from your Line Manager or Head of Department to apply for the grant, including an explanation of how the project aligns with your Faculty's strategy.
- **Communication feedback -** confirmation of how you heard about this fund, this will help us to promote future funds.
- **Declaration and approval -** confirmation you understand the rules and regulations of the fund.

Evaluation criteria

A joint review panel will assess each proposal according to the academic merit and the following criteria:

- **Project design and rationale**
  How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the project? How do the proposed activities assist with establishing new and emerging research collaborations? (30% of the evaluation score).
- **Collaborator complementarity and impact**
  What is the added value of the new or emerging collaboration? How do the proposed activities combine mutual areas of interest and strength? What are the anticipated benefits of involving early-stage/early career researchers and/or graduate researchers/PhD students? (20% of the evaluation score).
- **Potential impact**
  What desired outcomes do the planned activities set out to achieve? What are the anticipated benefits of the activities to local or international communities? How does the proposal demonstrate strong relevance to strategic priorities of the partner institutions? (20% of the evaluation score).
- **Capacity for future collaboration/funding**

What is the potential for this project to foster ongoing collaboration and through what mechanism(s)? How well does the proposed collaboration plan to access external funding? Is there an outline for potential next steps following the end of the project? (30% of the evaluation score).

Reporting after project completion

All awardees must, as a condition of receiving an award under this call, complete a narrative report that describes the outcomes, nature of collaboration, project impact, trainee involvement and opportunities for future collaboration that evolved from their project.

Information about this call

KTH Royal Institute of Technology
Christina Murray, Chief international advisor to the president, Management Office
e: tina@kth.se

Stockholm University
Henrik Smedjegården, European relations officer, Office for Research, Engagement and Innovation Services
e: henrik.smedjegarden@su.se

The University of Manchester
Helen Lusty, International Relations
e: international.partnerships@manchester.ac.uk