CALL for proposals and application form

Korea University and KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Joint Research Seed Fund

Guidelines for Applicants
Deadline: 25. 05. 2026

KU and KTH Royal Institute of Technology are pleased to announce the first 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 primarily focusing on teaching or training are not eligible.

The fund is open for 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 both KU and KTH.

Background to the fund

This initiative stems out of a series of meetings between the senior leadership teams.

Timeline

Call for proposals opens	27 April 2026
Deadline for submission	25 May 2026
Applicants notified	End of June 2026
Project start date	1 July 2026

Funding and project length

Recipients can be awarded up to:

- KTH Royal Institute of Technology: 100,000 SEK
- KU: 14,000,000 KRW

Projects will be funded for a period up to 18 months, starting from 1 July 2026. There is flexibility on start dates, but we would expect all projects to be underway by August at the latest.

Project scope, costs and eligibility

Applicants and collaborators

- The proposal must be a new collaboration, i.e. the collaborators cannot already have joint funding together.
- Each proposal MUST include a lead/PI from each university.
- **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.
- The lead applicant from each university needs to have a permanent post at the university. Participants in the proposal do not need to have a permanent post, but they must have an existing 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.
- KU Applicant Eligibility: This call is open to Full-time Faculty members from Korea University (Seoul Campus and Korea University Medical Center).
- Selection Priority (for KU Applicants): Priority will be given to KU PIs who are participating in any of KU's global joint seed funding programs for the first time. This is to encourage broader faculty engagement in international collaborations.

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 KU staff should be in the KU budget and costs for subsistence for KTH staff should be allocated in the KTH 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:
  - **KTH:** Business trip step by step, Guidelines for meetings and travel and Checklist for meetings and travel (appendix 1)
  - **KU:** KU adheres to its internal research funding regulations.
- Only travel to/from Stockholm/Seoul will be funded.

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.)*** • Research costs including consumables (up to a maximum of 20% of each institution's budget)*** 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 • PI personnel costs

*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).
***The 20% budget cap for the two items above does not apply to KU.
****This item is an eligible cost for KU, provided the conference is directly related to this joint research.

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.

Submission of Proposals

This is a joint call, and a single application should be submitted by filling out the form.

The documents should be submitted to kuircc@korea.ac.kr

The full proposal is comprised of the following elements:

- **Applicants' details – affiliations from each institution with contact details.**
  - Principle Investigator information (KU)
  - Principle Investigator information (KTH)
- **Research Proposal – details of the project.**
  - **Title:** of the Research Project
  - **Key words** that relate to the main topic of your proposal
  - **Project design and rationale**
    - **What is your project idea – a brief description of your project**
    - **How does the project make an impact and why is this important**
    - **Proposed Timeframe:** 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.
- **Communication feedback -** information on how you heard about this fund – this will help us to promote future funds.
- **Declaration and approval -** confirmation that 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, please specify what external funding you are aiming for, e.g. Horizon, NRF etc? 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.

- **Final Report**: A comprehensive final report must be submitted within one (1) month following the project's conclusion.

Strongly Encouraged Deliverables:

- Submission of a joint, peer-reviewed research paper to a SCI(E) journal (ideally within the top 10% of the field) within one year from the project end date.
- Submission of a proposal for an international joint research grant (e.g. Horizon Europe) within one year from the project end date.

Acknowledgement Requirement: All publications and presentations resulting from this project must clearly acknowledge the support of this program by stating "KTH-KU Joint Seed Funding."
Required acknowledgement statement: "This publication/presentation is supported in part by the Joint Seed Funding between KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Korea University."

Information about this call

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