

HKUST-UStA Global Knowledge Network Awards/Joint Seed Funding 2027 Request for Proposals and Guidelines for Applicants

Deadline for Applications: Thursday, 8 October 2026 (23:59 HKT / 16:59 BST)

Purpose

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and University of St Andrews (UStA) have identified each other as strategic partners to foster deep collaboration in research and education. The HKUST-UStA Global Knowledge Network Awards/Joint Seed Funding have been established to facilitate and support joint initiatives that will strengthen the two universities' strategic priorities as well as develop multi-disciplinary cutting-edge research to create academic and societal impact. We invite proposals from researchers in all disciplines at HKUST and UStA.

In this round of the awards, applicants are encouraged to submit funding proposals for innovative and sustainable programmes built around collaborative research linking HKUST and UStA. Proposals should be sustainable in the long-term with a plan for engagement that includes leveraging external funding and publication outputs. The joint funding aims to support the first steps of cooperation and is not meant as complete project funding.

In this round, up to two (2) proposals will be funded (each with two Principal Investigators; one from HKUST and one from UStA). Each successful proposal may receive up to the equivalent of HKD 40,000 from HKUST and GBP 5,000 from UStA.

Equality Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

Adherence to respective equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies are an important feature of this programme 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. Applicants should consider EDI as it applies to e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, (dis)ability, and career stages.

Sustainable Travel

HKUST and UStA recognise the importance of organising in-person meetings and events to support the development of collaborative partnerships. Therefore, both institutions encourage applicants to consider the environmental impact of their proposed research and travel. Please refer to UStA ' [Sustainable Research and Business Travel webpage](#) for more guidance.

Trusted Research (UStA applicants)

Trusted Research, the term used by the UK Government and other bodies to refer to national security issues in the planning and undertaking of research, has been an increasingly prominent agenda since 2019. UStA is required to put in place, and enforce, relevant provisions to ensure that it attends to this agenda. We have created guidance and a Trusted Research Tool to assist researchers and direct colleagues towards existing policy and process to ensure compliance where necessary. As part of your application to this programme, you confirm that you have (or will) review/ed relevant guidance and complete/d a Trusted Research Tool submission including any required outcomes. Please see the [Trusted Research web page](#) for information and access to the Tool.

1. Eligibility

- 1.1. For HKUST, applicants should be full-time faculty members. For UStA, applicants should be full-time or part-time academic staff with a contract of employment until at least the end of the project.
- 1.2. Emeritus and honorary faculty members, graduate students, post-docs, and research assistants/associates are not eligible to apply as Principal Investigators, but they are welcome to be part of the research team.
- 1.3. Activities can take place in Hong Kong or St Andrews. The motivation for holding the activity should be clearly explained, including how the involved HKUST and UStA faculties and schools can benefit in the long term from this cooperation.

Current recipients of collaboration funding administered by the Global Office at the UStA, whose projects are still ongoing and will not be completed by the application closing date, may apply for concurrent grants. However, they are required to submit a progress report on their current project along with their application.

2. Duration

Funding is available from 1 January 2027 until 31 December 2027.

3. Important Dates

Applications open	Tuesday, 11 August 2026
Applications close	Thursday, 8 October 2026 23:59 HKT / 16:59 BST
Successful applicants notified	December 2026
Latest date for projects to start	Friday, 1 January 2027
Mid-term progress review due	Thursday, 1 July 2027
Latest date for projects to end	Friday, 31 December 2027
Final report due	Tuesday, 1 February 2028
Post-project update report due	Saturday, 1 July 2028

4. Eligible Grant Activities/Costs

Activity/Cost	HKUST	UStA
Travel expenses: Airfare (only travel on economy class is allowed) and other travel expenses (e.g., train, rental car, lodging, meals)	eligible	eligible
Cost for hosting seminars/conferences or workshops	eligible	eligible
Accommodation and subsistence	eligible	eligible
Conference registration (related to the dissemination of collaborative research)	eligible	eligible
Consumable materials and supplies	eligible	eligible
Publications and printing (related to collaborative research)	eligible	eligible
Hiring graduate students to assist in research project	not eligible	eligible
Website development	eligible	eligible
General teaching or instructional programmes	not eligible	not eligible
Salaries or salary supplementation for faculty or staff: salaries and associated fringe-benefit costs for tenured and tenure-track faculty (including effort for faculty funded externally), teaching buyout, staff and post-doc salary)	not eligible	not eligible

Postgraduate Studentship (PGS)	not eligible	not eligible
Stipend payments to non-HKUST, non-UStA individuals	not eligible	not eligible
Student scholarships	not eligible	not eligible
Venue/space rental fee if event held on campus	not eligible	eligible
Mobile phone cards	not eligible	not eligible
Entertainment costs	not eligible	not eligible
Computers, including laptops (excluding access to high-performance computers or other specialized applications that are justified by the project) and basic computing facilities such as printers, word processing and other standard software	not eligible	not eligible
Indirect cost (non-required for this grant)	not eligible	not eligible

5. Submission Requirements

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

- Project details (including project abstract, keywords, timeline, project team composition and roles, etc.)*
- Project budget*
- CVs of the Principal Investigators (2 pages max)
- Brief endorsement letter of UStA Head of School

*Please refer to Point 9.2 for details.

6. Scoring and Selection Criteria

6.1. Criteria do not have weightings. Proposals are assessed holistically. All the applications will be reviewed by a joint committee (inclusive of both HKUST and UStA) and preference will be given to the proposals which meet the selection criteria detailed below.

Selection Criteria	Description
Academic quality and relevance	- Clearly describe the objectives and methodology to be employed with the project. The academic quality and innovativeness of the proposed activities will be considered alongside the soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology. - Explain the composition of project team and track record, a summary of how individuals' expertise will contribute to achieving the project aims, and highlights from any previous engagement, if applicable. 500-word maximum
Execution, including sustainability plan	- Elaborate on the workplan and milestones outlined in the timeframe. 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, produce publications, and develop the partnership. 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. 300-word maximum

Impact, legacy and scalability	• 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 could be transferred to other levels (local, regional, national, etc). • Explain how the project will impact beyond the academic sphere (i.e., benefit society, address global challenges, Sustainable Development Goals, etc). • Explain how the project activities and results will be communicated to different groups of target audience (e.g., publications, blogs, events, teaching/training materials, new educational collaborations, policy briefs, external funding bids etc.). • 300-word maximum
Partnership and strategic relevance	• Explain how the project will establish or strengthen a durable cooperation between the universities and participants. • Explain how the project will be shared with the broader academic communities at each institution and how it will promote and consolidate the relationship between the two universities. • Outline how the project will contribute to realising university strategies and support the research and teaching priorities of the Faculties/Schools/Departments. • 300-word maximum

7. Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the selected proposal will result in the following outcomes:

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	The research: - 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) publication will be in preparation for submission in a nationally/internationally recognised peer-reviewed scholarly journal
External funding	At least one (1) national/international competitive grant application will be in preparation or submitted
Training and education	Supervision and mentoring of visiting PhD students/postdoctoral researchers/junior scholars/Early Career Researchers
Joint Workshop	Organise at least one (1) joint workshop at either institution

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, faculty and school strategic priorities, and the availability of funds.

9. Application Submission

- 9.1. All applications must be jointly submitted by a Principal Investigator from HKUST and a Principal Investigator from UStA.
- 9.2. All applications must be submitted online via the [HKUST-UStA Global Knowledge Network Awards/Joint Seed Funding 2027 - Application Form](#). Both the “project details template” and “project budget template” can be downloaded from the cover page of the [online application form](#), and please

prepare the CVs of the two Principal Investigators (2 pages max) and the brief endorsement letter of UStA Head of School for submission.

9.3. Only complete submissions will be considered.

9.4. Late applications will not be considered.

10. Notification of Application Outcomes

Successful applicants will receive a letter of award outlining the process to accept the award. Feedback from the joint committee may be provided upon request.

11. Change of Investigator

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

12. Extensions

Under exceptional circumstances (such as when direct exchange is impossible due to an outbreak of an infectious disease or delays occur in research activities due to natural disasters, etc.), extensions will be approved for a maximum period of three months. Applicants seeking an extension must submit a revised budget and timeline of activities to both Programme Coordinators for approval at least 2 months before the project end date. Even in cases where the project period is extended, the total research funding cannot be increased.

13. Forfeiture of Grants

13.1. Grants not spent by 31 December 2027 must be returned so that unspent balances can be re-allocated.

13.2. UStA Principal Investigators are responsible for managing their project funds, reporting on their usage, facilitating the sharing of funds with their HKUST partner Principal Investigator where required, and returning unspent funds to the university by the project end date.

14. Financial and Reporting Obligations

14.1. 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.

14.2. Awardees must adhere to the purchasing guidelines of the respective universities to which reimbursement is to be sought. Reimbursement/approval of each expenditure item will be capped at the approved amount.

14.3. Recipients must submit a mid-term progress review by 1 July 2027, a final report by 1 February 2028, and a post-project update report by 1 July 2028. Failure to submit the reports will result in all members of the project team being ineligible to submit future funding applications for HKUST-UStA Global Knowledge Network Awards/Joint Seed Funding.

14.4. 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.

15. Marketing and Communications

Recipients may be contacted by HKUST and UStA for the purposes of promoting their successful funding application and informing others of their research. Materials such as photos, videos, and news stories that provide an update on the project's progress and which can be shared more widely are also welcomed. Both universities may occasionally request brief project updates to support awareness of the partnership.

16. Publications

Any publications (e.g., abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g., public presentations) arising from activities supported by the awards should acknowledge assistance received from the awards and copies or notification should be submitted to the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Development at HKUST and the Global Office at UStA. The standard acknowledgment is "HKUST-University of St Andrews Global Knowledge Network Awards/Joint Seed Funding".

For further information please contact the Programme Coordinators:

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Judy Ma Senior Manager Office of the Vice President for Research and Development Email: gkn@ust.hk Phone: +852 2358 6093	University of St Andrews Harriet Sheridan Partnerships Officer (Research and Reputation) Global Office Email: partnerships@st-andrews.ac.uk Phone: +44 (0)1334 462151
--	---