

HKUST-UoB Global Knowledge Network Awards 2026 (Round 2)
Request for Proposals and Guidelines for Applicants
Deadline for Applications: 21 August 2026 (23:59 HKT / 16:59 BST)

Purpose

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and University of Bristol (UoB) have identified each other as strategic partners to foster deep collaboration in research and education. The HKUST-UoB Global Knowledge Network Awards 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 UoB.

This scheme has been designed to support collaborative activities which are geared towards enhancing international research development and collaboration, leading towards joint research funding bids as well as other outcomes such as international co-authored publications. Activities funded through HKUST-UoB Global Knowledge Network Awards could therefore include international visits for co-production of research bids, or workshops/writing retreats to develop and inform bid development. The scheme can be used for either establishing or advancing international research collaborations; however, all activities must have plans for the sustainability, longevity and legacy of the collaboration built in.

In this round, up to five (5) proposals will be funded (each with two Principal Investigators: one from HKUST and one from UoB). Each successful proposal may receive up to the equivalent of HKD 40,000 from HKUST and GBP 4,000 from UoB for a total of approximately HKD 80,000/GBP 8,000 for the joint project.

1. The funding opportunity

This scheme is for short visits or similar activities (e.g. collaborative workshops) designed to catalyze and develop specific research outcomes which are in line with both universities' strategic research interests. Activities can either be in-person or hybrid, bringing together academics from both institutions to develop collaborative research endeavors. Visits and/or associated activities funded through this scheme might last from a few days up to a month and may involve individuals or groups, and engagement with the wider university communities is strongly encouraged. Activities should be interactive and involve two-/multi-way knowledge exchange, rather than dissemination events. This fund is strictly and explicitly not for conferences and not for sustained research activity itself; it is for the development of research collaborations leading to joint funding bids.

All proposals must have a HKUST Lead and a UoB Lead, who will be the budget holder for the respective university, both co-produce and co-deliver the proposed activities and associated outcomes and outputs. Additional collaborators are also permitted where they add value. The primary aim of all activities must be to make a step-change in research development, leading to tangible outcomes including joint bids for external research funding as well as other outputs such as international co-authored publications. While the funding can be used to support activities which help you to develop your research skills and international profile, this scheme does not support visits that are primarily aimed at training or to support Fellowship applications; the benefits should extend beyond the individual.

Activities should take place in HKUST or UoB. The motivation for holding the activity should be clearly explained, including how the involved HKUST and UoB faculty and schools can benefit in the long term from this cooperation.

2. Eligibility Principal Investigator

- 2.1. Applications are open to any HKUST-eligible Principal Investigator and UoB-eligible Principal Investigator.
- 2.2. Eligible to submit proposals are HKUST and UoB full time faculty members. Emeritus and honorary staff are not eligible to apply as Principal Investigators but may be members of the project team.
- 2.3. 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 team.

3. Duration

Funding is available from 28 September 2026 until 31 July 2027.

4. Important Dates

Applications open	17 July 2026
Applications close	21 August 2026 23:59 HKT / 16:59 BST
Successful applicants notified	By 15 September 2026
Latest date for projects to start	28 September 2026
Latest date for projects to end	31 July 2027
Final reports due	31 August 2027

5. Eligible Costs

Activity/Cost	HKUST	UoB
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 joint workshops and related logistic cost such as event production, catering and transportation cost etc.	eligible	eligible
Accommodation and subsistence	eligible	eligible
Academic speaker or participant fees or honoraria	not eligible	not eligible
Conference registration (related to collaborative research)	not eligible	not eligible
Consumable materials and supplies	not eligible	not eligible
Publications and printing (related to collaborative research)	not eligible	not eligible
Hiring graduate students to assist in research project	not eligible	not eligible
General teaching or instructional programs	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 in soft-money positions), teaching buyout, staff and post-doc salary)	not eligible	not eligible
Postgraduate Studentship (PGS)	not eligible	not eligible
Stipend payments to non-HKUST, non-UoB individuals	not eligible	not eligible
Student scholarships	not eligible	not eligible
Venue/space rental fee if event held on campus	not eligible	not 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

6. Selection Criteria

HKUST and UoB will process submitted applications after the deadline. Review committees from both institutions will evaluate all proposals to determine the final awarded projects. Please ensure that your application is written for a generalist audience, avoiding overly technical language, descriptions, and jargon.

Applications will be reviewed against the following criteria:

- Is there a clear rationale for this collaboration? Are there clear synergies between the applicants, with strong potential for developing a meaningful and mutually beneficial collaboration and clear evidence that the applicants can effectively deliver the proposed plans and achieve suitable outcomes?
- Is the primary aim of the project to develop international research collaborations leading to joint funding bids?
- Are the aims of the project and planned outcomes appropriately ambitious yet achievable? Is there a strong likelihood of significant outcomes arising from the visit, including successful research funding bids, international co-authored publications, and advancement of the relevant academic field(s)?
- Is there convincing evidence of the sustainability and legacy of the collaboration beyond this investment, with potential long-term benefits for both universities?
- Do the proposed activities serve the strategic interests of both universities?
- Are the cited costs reasonable and appropriate for the proposed activity/activities and their intended outcomes, offering good value for money?
- Will the proposed activity/activities attract further external engagement, such as engagement from policy and practice, the media, and/or other sectors?

Each proposal will be assessed according to the selection criteria described below.

Assessment	Score
An excellent application which fully meets all criteria and is very likely to increase the research profile of both universities through generation of high-quality external research funding bids, as well as achieving other outcomes and outputs including international co-authored publications and enhanced global reputation. Clear evidence of strategic benefit to both universities. Fundable.	6
A strong application which meets the criteria and has strong potential to increase the international profile of both universities through generation of competitive external research funding bids, as well as achieving other outcomes and outputs such as international co-authored publications and enhanced global reputation. Good evidence of strategic benefit to both universities. Fundable.	5
A good application which generally addresses the criteria well and has good potential to increase the international profile of both universities through generation of external research funding bids, as well as potential for other suitable outcomes and outputs such as international co-authored publications. Some evidence of strategic benefit to both universities. Room for improvement, but fundable.	4
A reasonable application which addresses most of the criteria and has some potential to increase the international research profile of both universities, but would need strengthening in order to be funded. Not fundable.	3
A poor application which has some merits, but which fails to adequately address the assessment criteria and should therefore not be funded.	2
A weak/ineligible application which does not meet the criteria and cannot be funded.	1

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) referred publication in a nationally/internationally recognized scholarly journal
External funding	At least one (1) national/international competitive grant submission
Joint Workshop	Organize at least one (1) joint workshop at either institution

We expect all applicants to have identified a suitable funder(s) and scheme(s) to target for bid(s) prior to submitting their application. In order to be eligible, the application must include at least one external funding bid which includes research income. The Panel will look favourably upon applications with more than one planned external research funding bid. Applicants are welcome to include plans for other types of bid in addition, including internal and/or external funding where appropriate, and are encouraged to consider contingency plans for alternative funding sources in case their primary bid is unsuccessful.

8. Assessment Process

Award selection will be a joint decision by committee members of both universities, which reserves final authority over the selection of projects, considering university and faculty 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 UoB.
- 9.2. All applications must be submitted online via [here](#).

Please prepare the following documents before submission:

- Project Details*
- Project Budget*
- CVs of the two Principal Investigators (2 pages max)

*Templates of the first two documents can be downloaded [here](#).

- 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 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 31 July 2027 must be returned so that unspent balances can be re-allocated.

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 to which reimbursement is to be sought. Reimbursement of each expenditure item will be capped at the approved amount.

Recipients must submit a final report by 31 August 2027. Failure to submit a completed report will result in all members of the project team being ineligible to submit future funding applications for HKUST-UoB Global Knowledge Network Awards.

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 HKUST and UoB 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.

15. 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 Global Partnerships Team in the Global Engagement Division at UoB. The standard acknowledgment is "HKUST-UoB Global Knowledge Network Awards".

Contact information

For further queries, please contact the Program Coordinators:

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