

## ISPF JAPAN-UK ENGINEERING BIOLOGY WEBINAR held on 21 Feb 2024

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### WEBINAR LINK:

[https://ukri.zoom.us/rec/share/e\\_0bZZ9\\_1nu1lf10zaRafWCYkBTUwsiMEIE2nSzCcz6zynKJOA3FzKxsMDMJGHlv.I5Up0Sj4taLgnNIz?startTime=1708511466000](https://ukri.zoom.us/rec/share/e_0bZZ9_1nu1lf10zaRafWCYkBTUwsiMEIE2nSzCcz6zynKJOA3FzKxsMDMJGHlv.I5Up0Sj4taLgnNIz?startTime=1708511466000)

Passcode: ?WP5Czvz

#### COSTINGS

1. *What can the funds be used for by both the UK and the Japanese partners?*

##### **UK:**

UK researchers are eligible to claim directly incurred (DI) if their time spent on the grant is auditable and directly allocated (DA) costs following standard UKRI guidelines. These costs align with a typical BBSRC responsive mode grant and DI costs may include allowable items such as investigator time and other researcher roles staff time, travel costs, research-related expenses, communication expenses, materials, supplies, conference or workshop expenses, insurances and small equipment (below £10K). Equipment purchases exceeding £10k must be justified based on our standard BBSRC guidelines.

Where a research project involves periods of more than six months away from the home institution for one or more research staff, the home RO can still claim indirect costs for that person but not estates costs.

Please find the full costing details from our Guidance document below.

[UK Research and Innovation fEC Grants Standard Terms and Conditions of Grant Guidance](#)

##### **Japan:**

The following direct costs are eligible for funding by JST for the Japan based team: a. Travel expenses, b. Personnel costs, c. Facilities, equipment and consumables, and d. Miscellaneous. For more details, please refer to the [Japan-UK Engineering Biology call text](#) on pages 12-13.

2. *Who should pay for the researcher exchange costs when UK researchers travel to Japan and vice versa?*

**UK:** Researcher exchange costs for UK researchers traveling to Japan will be covered by the UK grant. UK researchers can claim all auditable Directly Incurred (DI) costs encompassing travel (visa, air and ground expenses – taxis etc), accommodation, research-related expenses, communication expenses, subsistence (accommodation, meals and per diem) and insurance, whilst in Japan against the grant. The UK organisation would still be able to claim Indirect rates for the researcher, including time away, whilst they're overseas, but not Estates rates.

**Japan:** JST will support the activities of the Japanese component. For example, the following specific expenses are intended to be covered by JST direct expenses, provided that the

Japanese research institution to which the outgoing researcher belongs has a disbursement system in place for:

- Research reagents, materials, consumables, etc. incurred during the stay at the UK partner institution.

- Living expenses during the stay in the UK.

(Dormitory expenses, bedding expenses, library fees, facility and room use fees, taxi fees in areas where public transportation such as trains and buses cannot be used.)

3. *Will the Japanese component allow funds to be used for employing researchers and conducting research given that 70% of the funding is dedicated to international engagement activities?*

**Japan:** JST-supported direct costs can be used for personnel expenses for research participants, including postdoctoral fellows, listed in the research plan. Employment for the purpose of outgoing researchers who contribute to international networking and talent mobility through their research can be included in the 70%, but employment for the sole purpose of conducting research in Japan, is not included in the 70%.

JST envisions that ASPIRE funding will be used as additional funding for Japan based researchers to promote and/or expand their activities that contribute to international networking and talent mobility as part of their ongoing research project, where their fundamental research funding and human resources are secured.

4. *If Japanese researchers are not allowed to employ PDRAs, how will they be able to use ¥234 million (approx. £1M), whilst UK researchers seem to be able to claim PDRA staff time from their grants?*

**Japan:** Please see comment above. JST expects the Japanese team to actively engage in international networking and talent mobility through research. Estimating that it would cost approximately £60,000 to send them to the UK for a year to conduct research, we believe that 70% is not necessarily a large percentage if two to three outgoing researchers are involved in the Japanese component.

5. *It was made clear that the JST ASPIRE project aim is to have researcher exchange and that 70% of the funding must be used for this purpose. Will this also be the case for the UK side? Or are UK researchers able to use the funding as they see fit for the proposal?*

Researcher exchange is indeed one of the key objectives of the current call, among other objectives and we expect to see plans for researcher exchanges from the UK side. It will be up to the UK research team to define the exact frequency, duration, and overall cost of these exchanges. We have not set an upper limit on the budget to be used on researcher exchange.

6. *Can PhD students be supported through this programme? (For full 3-year PhD project?). What kinds of cost can be used for PhD students?*

This programme does not fund PhD studentships. However, it allows the involvement of doctoral students in designated tasks within the project, engaging them to perform specific activities. It would be possible for students to contribute to the project solely through assigned roles within the UK research team (e.g., visiting researcher, research and innovation associate

etc.), and not as students receiving stipends from the grant. Funding can be claimed to cover costs incurred by doctoral students within the project under the assigned roles according to the standard costing parameters established.

7. *Are there restrictions on how the funding can be utilized by the UK teams. Any restrictions on spending/costing? Anything unusual that is not eligible in this call?*

BBSRC is not imposing specific restrictions on the utilization of funding. We encourage research teams to adhere to the [UK Standard Grant guidelines](#) as they make decisions on the allocation of their research costs. The UK team has the flexibility to determine the appropriate research staff needed, number of outgoing researchers, their length of stay in Japan etc, based on the project's objectives and specific needs. Applicants should note that researcher exchange is expected to take place in projects funded under this opportunity and the concreteness and feasibility of plans for promoting early career researchers and researcher mobility will be assessed.

## ELIGIBILITY

8. *Should the Japanese researchers hold a grant award (from anywhere, including industry)? Is this also the case for the UK side? Is the extent of building on current / previous funding part of the assessment?*

**Japan:** Since ASPIRE requires Japan based researchers to use approximately 70% of their funding for international networking and talent mobility through research, a large portion of the JST funding cannot be used for the research itself. Therefore, whilst it is not a condition to hold another active grant, the panel will consider whether applicants are holding sufficient funds for the conduct of research in Japan based on the outlined project objectives.

**UK:** BBSRC is not imposing any conditions relating to project leads holding previous grants from industry or possess other significant research funding to be eligible. The [standard BBSRC eligibility requirements](#) are applicable for this call. More detail about UK eligible researchers and institutions can be found here: [Check if you're eligible for funding – BBSRC – UKRI](#)

9. *Can / Should industry be involved in the project?*

**UK:** Industries may engage in the project solely as project partners, and while they are not eligible for direct funding from BBSRC, they can participate through cash or in-kind contributions as collaborating organizations. Project partners may include private sector, non-governmental organisations, third parties that would not normally receive funding directly from the grant and may provide direct (cash) or indirect (in-kind) contributions such as expertise, staff time or use of facilities.

**Japan:** Researchers from private companies in Japan are eligible to participate in the project as described in the call text on page 5 "[5-I Eligibility](#)". Companies that enter into a contract research agreement with JST will be subject to different terms and conditions than universities, please contact JST for details.

## SCOPE

10. *What is the difference in the scope, between the BBSRC-JST and MRC-AMED calls?*

The BBSRC call is wider in scope along themes including bioengineered cells and systems, bio-inspired design, novel materials. The MRC call is more specific around fundamental or translational research projects in the field of novel therapeutics and diagnostics. We are happy to be more specific to your own project over email.

11. *Can the proposal meet only one specific priority theme, or could it fit both priority themes?*

Within the BBSRC discovery research and cross-cutting technologies call, all ideas that fit under the themes are encouraged. The themes do not have hard boundaries, therefore novel ideas that cut across the three themes are also encouraged, but this is not mandated - you can submit a proposal within one theme.

## OTHER

12. *Will there be any opportunities to link up with/identify potential partners? Is there a website or any potential way to know who is interested in this call and looking for partners?*

Answer: We have set up a Guild webpage that will allow both UK and Japanese researchers interested in the call to collaborate and network. Please use the link below to sign up, and you'll hopefully have fruitful discussions.

<https://link.guild.co/MxpAk8rJ5tem7qU68>

13. *How many UK partners are expected to be on this proposal and from how many UK institutions?*

**UK:** BBSRC is not imposing any predetermined limits on the number of UK partners or institutions expected to be included in a proposal. However, given the size of the awards we would encourage applicants with similar research objectives and particularly those based on the same institutions to work together.

**Japan:** For completion, JST is not imposing any predetermined limits on the number of Japanese partners or institutions expected to be included in a proposal. A joint team with a balanced composition of researchers in Japan and the UK is expected, depending on the purpose of this joint call and the research budget.

14. *Is this funding call a one-time opportunity, or will it be open annually?*

There are no plans for this to be an annual call, nor is there a secured budget for a repetition of this activity in future.

15. *With respect to the IP collaboration agreement, does that need to be in place before the submission or after a successful award?*

**UK and JST:** Both agencies request the research teams to conclude a collaborative research agreement with the partner research organization within 6 months from the start of the project. For BBSRC the following applies: Collaborative agreements must be put in place for funded

applications, to enable all parties to better understand their roles on the grant and to clarify the IP rights position.

For JST the following applies: Participating organisations are required to conclude a Collaborative Research Agreement (CRA) in a form that is consistent with the contract with JST regarding the handling of IP rights, confidentiality, etc. so as not to impede the appropriate implementation of research and the utilisation of research results.

16. *What length of exchange stays is appropriate? (Japan side says one year: can this be divided up into several trips? And in total one year? How about UK researchers staying in Japan – which length of stay is expected / recommended?)*

**UK:** UK researchers traveling to Japan do not have a set duration limit for their stay. However, applicants should be aware that, as part of the assessment criteria, they are required to provide a justification for the purpose of the exchanges and demonstrate how these exchanges have the potential to enrich the professional development of those participating.

**Japan:** In principle, it is desirable to send researchers from Japan to the UK for a period of one year, but a tailored length of stay may also be acceptable if it would best suit the networking and fostering ECRs planned for the project, e.g., several months on multiple occasions. Importantly, your proposal explains how these plans relate to the project goals.

17. *How can mutually beneficial and collaborative research projects be ensured, noting the variations within the JST and BBSRC approaches?*

Although ASPIRE and ISPF are operationally different, their purposes are similar to each other. We hope applicants will take a positive view that this will enable unprecedented collaborative research by researchers from both Japan and the UK and expect the JST and BBSRC to accept ambitious joint research proposals.

18. *Will the submission deadline be pushed back? Is the prior notice deadline stage a hard deadline?*

The submission deadline will not be pushed back as this FAQ addresses the questions raised during the webinar. Applicants should also note that the prior notice deadline in Japan is not a hard deadline, so Japanese applicants will be able to submit their full proposals after that deadline even if they had not submitted a prior notice.

19. *How do requests for paper citations and consideration of impact factor in the application align with DORA principles?*

To ensure the optimal use of the available research budget shared by Japan and the UK, JST considers it necessary to obtain information on the PIs/PLs' research achievements in the context of relevance and diversity of the team, as reflected in evaluation criterion item v. This will provide supporting evidence to help the panel assess against one out of six assessment criteria in this JST-BBSRC joint call. As a signatory to DORA, JST is committed to promoting a wide range of research evaluations based on a variety of indicators.