Welcome to EPSRC Webinar for Japan-UK Joint call for advancing human centred AI

- Technical difficulties: email airobotics@epsrc.ukri.org
- Please wait for the end of the presentation before submitting questions
- Submit questions through the Q&A function (there is no open chat)
- Individual specific questions: please email us directly at airobotics@epsrc.ukri.org and we can arrange a one-to-one meeting.
- The webinar is not being recorded: we will publish an FAQ on the funding finder page in the coming weeks and a copy of the slides will be made available for reference.
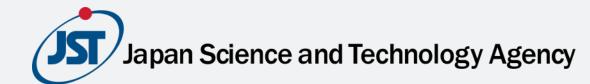- Full details of the call are on the funding opportunity page [Japan-UK joint call for collaborations in advancing human-centred AI – UKRI](#)
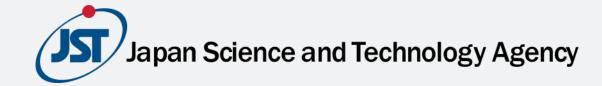
What we will cover today

- Introduction to the funding opportunity

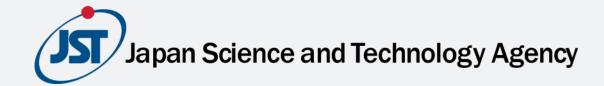   - Funding opportunity scope and aims

- Funding opportunity details

- Q&A

Japan and UK partnership

- We are delighted to be partnering with the Japan Science and Technology Agency's ASPIRE programme.
- Japan and the UK have a strong tradition of working together to tackle scientific challenges.
- We have recently celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the Japan-UK Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement.
- The ASPIRE programme aims to support internationally competitive collaborative research projects between Japan and the UK focusing, with this opportunity focussing on the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and data science.

Why is this opportunity important to the AI landscape?

UKRI's statement of opportunities on AI set out our vision for AI and our aspiration to take a key role in realising the potential benefits of AI. Our vision is founded on:

- building ambitious new UK AI capability
- growing the UK AI research and innovation capacity in a sustainable way
- achieving positive economic, societal, and environmental impact through growth of the sector and wider adoption of AI that works for everyone
- enabling adventure and creativity in AI research and innovation
- increasing the connections across the UK's AI research and innovation communities.

EPSRC recognises this is an opportunity for the UK AI community to work on excellent research and innovation and foster international collaborations.
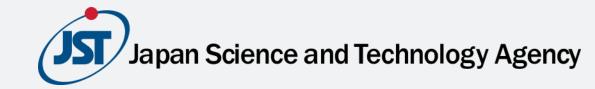
UKRI's AI Ecosystem

UKRI supports an AI portfolio of up to £1 billion in recent years. This portfolio builds upon the themes of AI as a critical technology, AI Skills, Pioneering responsible and safe AI and , Scaling up AI.

In the last few years, EPSRC has supported the following investments that contribute to this portfolio

- £87m in Nine AI Hubs, that drive AI foundations in priority areas
- £100m to support The Alan Turing Institute, as the national institute for data science and AI
- £33m in Responsible AI UK (RAi UK), to convene and connect the AI ecosystem to deliver safe AI systems
- £217m in AI CDTs, cross UKRI awards that have trained 2000 students to date.

What are we looking for?

We expect applicants to consider how they will engage or partner with existing investments in the AI ecosystem to maximise networking and research for team members and the wider community.

We aim to support projects that will:

- Create leading international research networks that nurture early career researchers to invigorate the AI sector in each country.
- Demonstrate how collaboration between researchers in the Japan and the UK will advance human-centred AI.
- Leverage the strength of each country and address weaknesses by collaboration.

You must consider how your research will contribute to world leading AI research and innovation. This could be through advancing sustainability of AI, use of AI in real world settings, understanding how responsible AI will benefit society and technology or talent exchange and mobility.
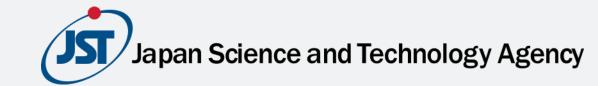
What are we looking for? (continued)

Your application should relate to one or more of the following research themes; Next-generation AI, Robotics, AI for Health or Human-computer Interface.

Applications are not limited to these themes, if another theme is supported you must provide a case and rationale why this is of relevance to this funding opportunity.

Applications focussed on novel development of AI and algorithms are preferred for this funding opportunity. If the novelty of your project is in the application of a technology or an approach you will need to explain the relevance to this opportunity.

EPSRC and JST will take the final decision on the remit of submitted applications.

Funding Opportunity Scope

Next-generation AI

Improving machine learning (deep learning) algorithms, establishing reliable AI and responsible AI systems, and applied research in areas such as computer vision and speech recognition and natural language processing.

Robotics

Research on autonomous systems, autonomous driving, industrial robots, communication robots, companion robots, and robots capable of teaching advanced skills (for example, craftsmanship) (excluding purely control-based or mechanical engineering research).

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

JST Japan Science and Technology Agency
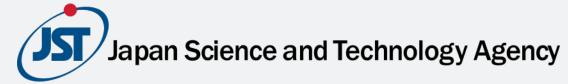
Funding Opportunity Scope (continued)

AI for Health

Future predictive research for a healthier population, covering novel AI, automation and data science techniques to creating a healthier state. This includes advanced diagnostics, visualisation of invisible disease lesions and prediction and prevention of lifestyle-related diseases, frailty and early detection of cognitive decline.

Human-computer Interface

Research related to novel technologies to allow humans to interact with digital technologies, for example through virtual reality (VR) and metaverse; and to enhance human physical and cognitive capabilities using information science technologies such as VR, AI, robotics and information communication technologies (ICT).

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

JST Japan Science and Technology Agency

Timeline

Call opens for Japanese research	25 February 2025
Call opens for UK applicants	20 March 2025
Webinar UK	25 March 2025
Webinar Japan	27 March 2025
Prior Notice	8 May 2025
Call closes in UK	22 May 2025 at 4pm
Call closes in Japan	23 May 2025 at 5am UK time
Peer Review	June - August
Prioritisation Panel	September 2025
Interview for successful Japanese PI's	October 2025
Outcomes of panel communicated	October 2025

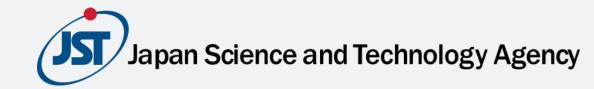# Funding Opportunity Details

Eligibility

EPSRC eligibility

- EPSRC standard eligibility rules apply to this funding opportunity, applicants in the UK must meet the EPSRC eligibility requirements. For full details, visit [Check if your institution is eligible for funding](#).

JST eligibility

- Japan based researchers should be conducting research at a research institution (university, independent administrative institution, public experimental research institution, public-interest corporation, or company) within Japan.

- Applicants in Japan must meet the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) eligibility requirements.

Funding Available (slide 1 of 3)

UK applicants

The earliest anticipated start date of funded projects will be January 2026. The duration of this award can be up to five years.

EPSRC has a total of £6 million for this activity. Funding will be available for up to four research projects.

UK budget requests should be up to £1.5 million (80% of the FEC).

Japanese applicants

Japanese budget requests should be up to ¥280 million/project (incl. 30% overhead expenses).
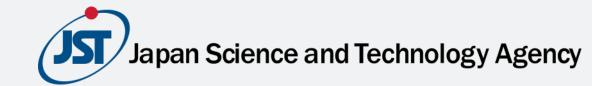
Funding Available (slide 2 of 3)

We aim to fund up to four collaborations through this activity for projects of five years duration. Applications may consist of a single research project, or a suite of related research activities in a defined research area.

We would expect to see funding requests to support collaborative research between the UK and Japan which include travel, subsistence and consumables for the project leads, project co-leads and research staff to visit or have extended work placements at a partner's laboratory overseas.

Funding Available (slide 3 of 3)

What we will fund (UK applicants only)

You can request funding for costs such as:

- a contribution to the salary of the project lead and co-leads
- support for other posts such as research, project management and technical
- research consumables
- travel and subsistence costs
- data preservation, data sharing and dissemination costs
- estates and indirect costs

What we will not fund (UK applicants only)

- Equipment with value equal to or greater than £10,000 per item (including VAT) is not available through this funding opportunity.
- Individual items of equipment with value below £10,000 (including VAT) may be included in the 'Directly incurred – other costs' heading.
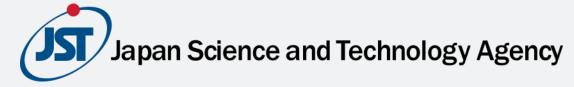- PhD studentships may not be included in the costs sought from EPSRC.

Funding Expectations

Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) expects that a substantive proportion of funding for Japanese element of research projects (approximately 70% of funding) to be allocated to activities that further ASPIRE's objectives of:

- building and expanding international research networks that foster cutting-edge research and development,
- laying the foundation for long-lasting relationships and continued involvement in the international research community by promoting international talent mobility and providing research opportunities to early career researchers.

EPSRC expects that the UK element of research projects reciprocate Japanese effort towards researcher mobility through research staff exchanges, but do not expect the same percentage of budget to be allocated for researcher mobility.
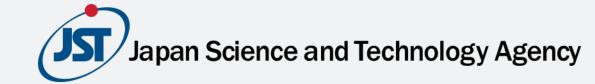
How to Apply (slide 1 of 4)

Submitting your application

We are running this funding opportunity on the new Funding Service, before starting an application:

- you will need to log in or create an account on The Funding Service (TFS).
- you can save completed details in TFS at any time and return to continue your application later.

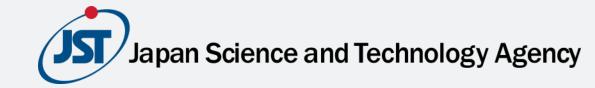Read our advice on [writing proposals](#) for EPSRC funding.

How to Apply (slide 2 of 4)

Application Development

The Japan and the UK team need to develop a joint proposal and submit their applications by following sequence of steps.

- The project leads (PL) in UK is responsible for submitting the joint proposal via the UKRI Funding Service (TFS).

- The UK project leads (PL) should download the completed joint proposal from TFS once it is completed and share a copy in PDF format securely with the Japan-based PI of their join team.

How to Apply (slide 3 of 4)

Application Development continued

The Japan-based PI should then merge:

- the PDF file of the joint proposal shared by the Project Leads (PL) in UK and
- a separately completed application with additional information requested by JST in the designated application form "Japan-UK AI and Information Application Form" into one PDF file and
- upload the merged file to e-Rad.

For Japan-based applicants, please see the JST Application Guidelines for details

How to Apply (slide 4 of 4)

Deadlines

JST must receive [prior notice](#) for Japen based applicants, to be submitted by 8 May 2025 2:00pm (Japan time).

EPSRC must receive your application by 4:00pm (UK time) on 22 May 2025.

JST must receive the Japan based applicants e-RAD submission by 5:00am (UK time) on 23 May 2025.
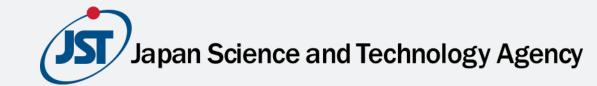
Application Questions

The following questions will be included via the UKRI Funding Service

- Vision and Approach
- Research partnership
- Plan for Early Career Researcher (ECR) and International Researcher Mobility
- Applicant and team capability to deliver
- Resources and cost justification
- Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI)

Application Questions (continued)

The following questions will be included in the UKRI Funding Service for UK applicants only:

- Additional documentation: JST-EPSRC joint application form
- Project partners
- Project partners letters (or emails) of support
- Facilities
- Ethics and responsible research and innovation (with additional sub-questions)
- Data management and sharing
- Trusted Research and Innovation

Assessment Process (slide 1 of 3)

We will assess your application using the following process:

Project applications received will be reviewed by JST and EPSRC to confirm that your application:
- is within the scope of this funding opportunity
- successfully meets the eligibility requirements for both agencies

Subject to successful eligibility and scope checks, applications will be subject to an assessment process led by EPSRC in partnership with JST.

EPSRC will coordinate and manage the review of applications in consultation with JST. Full information on the assessment process can be found via the funding opportunity page.

Assessment Process (slide 2 of 3)

Peer Review

We will invite peers to review your application independently, against the specified criteria for this funding opportunity. Those invited to peer review applications will only be expected to provide a review based on the information entered and displayed via the Funding Service.

You will not be able to nominate reviewers for applications on the new UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Funding Service. Research councils will continue to select expert reviewers.

Panel

Following peer review, we will invite peers to use the evidence provided by reviewers and your applicant response to assess the quality of your application and rank it alongside other applications after which the panel will make a funding recommendation.

Japanese applicants recommended for funding will be required to submit additional information to meet the requirements of JST following the panel. In addition, JST will hold an interview with the principal investigator of the projects recommended for funding as per the ranking list.

Overview of Assessment Criteria

The assessment areas we will use during the peer review stage are:

- vision and approach
- **research partnership**
- **plan for Early Career Researcher (ECR) and international researcher mobility**
- applicant and team capability to deliver
- **resources and cost justification**
- ethics and responsible research and innovation

The assessment criteria in bold will be discussed as they are, non-standard and specific to this funding opportunity.
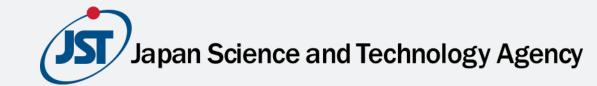
Assessment Criteria (slide 1 of 7)

Research Partnership

When providing a response applicants are expected to:
- describe in detail how your proposed work will add value to the advancement of the research field and the relevant research community
- describe your specific plans for building and expanding your international network through this proposal, with the aim of building, involving and developing a world-class international research community
- describe the specific networks that you expect to have established and expanded by the end of this assignment.

Research Partnership continued

How does your proposed work involve collaboration between UK and Japan? Demonstrate how the research partnership:

- involves high-level international joint research aimed at enhancing scientific and technological capabilities for both countries
- delivers the research strengths, added value and synergies that can be achieved through UK-Japan collaboration
- demonstrates a clear and feasible division of roles between the Japanese and UK research, throughout the research period
- has an appropriate approach for building and expanding the international collaboration and a world-leading network
- involves research exchanges and collaborations that are equitable and mutually beneficial for both countries
- advances the research field in both Japan and the UK.

Plan for Early Career Researcher (ECR) and International Researcher Mobility
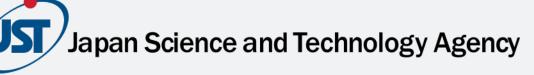
Applicants must demonstrate a clear plan to support career development of ECR's, mechanisms to develop the next generation of leading researchers and provide researchers (to include but not limited to ECR's) with opportunities to achieve international mobility.

Each of the Japan and UK teams should include one or several researchers who will travel from Japan to UK and from UK to Japan respectively to conduct research (outgoing researcher). Please describe the plans of any outgoing researchers within the next two to three years, providing the following information.

When providing a response please ensure to include the following information for outgoing researcher(s):
(i) name of researchers, (ii) current host organisations, (iii) roles and (iv) intended host organisations in partner country.

Plan for ECR and International Researcher Mobility continued

For Japan-based applicants only, the outgoing researcher(s) eligible to go abroad should either be:

- Students enrolled in an advanced degree course (i.e., master's or doctoral course)
- Researchers who have obtained their final degree less than 15 years ago and are conducting research activities at universities, public research institutions, etc.

The outgoing researcher(s) will be expected to conduct research activities in the UK for approximately one year. There is no limit to the number of researchers who may go abroad, outgoing researchers can include the PI, Co-PI or research participants of the project.

For UK applicants only, outgoing researcher(s) from the UK to Japan can include those assigned in the core team for example; project lead (PL), project co-lead (UK) (PcL), specialist, professional enabling staff, research and innovation associate, technician, visiting researcher, and researcher co-lead (RcL).

UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
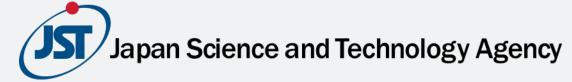
JST Japan Science and Technology Agency

Plan for ECR and International Researcher Mobility continued

Describe your plans for Early Career Researcher (ECR) and International Researcher Mobility. Describe how your plans:

- include appropriate goals set to achieve career development of researchers including early career researchers, through international mobility activities
- involve a sufficient number of early career researchers
- are effective for developing early career researchers to become the next generation of leading researchers (succession planning) and promotes the development of early career researchers
- demonstrate the ability to support early career researchers and international talent mobility
- for the proposed project aids with researcher mobility (to include but not limited to ECR's).

Resources and cost justification

What will you need to deliver your proposed work and how much will it cost?

Justify the application's more costly resources, in particular:

• project staff

• significant travel for field work or collaboration (but not regular travel between collaborating organisations or to conferences) , for applicants in Japan please see ASPIRE website for further details.

• any consumables beyond typical requirements, or that are required in exceptional quantities

• all facilities and infrastructure costs

• all resources that have been costed as 'Exceptions'.

Resources and cost justification

Assessors are not looking for detailed costs or a line-by-line breakdown of all project resources. Overall, they want you to demonstrate how the resources you anticipate needing for your proposed work:

- are comprehensive, appropriate, and justified
- represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes
- maximise potential outcomes and impacts

Resources and cost justification for Japan-based applicants, please check the JST Application Guidelines for details.

Assessors will only assess the application resources and cost justification as displayed and entered via the Funding Service.

Key points to remember

- The joint application submitted to TFS will undergo assessment. Therefore, applications must contain details for UK and Japan team members.
- Registration for the e-RAD system takes time, please register prior to the UK call closing.
- UK applicants must share the application with Japan applicants to be submitted to e-RAD.
- Consider how you intend to utilise and engage with existing UKRI AI investments to support the development of ECR/Outgoing researchers.

Deadlines

- JST must receive [prior notice](#) for Japen based applicants, to be submitted by 8 May 2025 2:00pm (Japan time).
- EPSRC must receive your application by 4:00pm (UK time) on 22 May 2025.
- JST must receive the Japan based applicants e-RAD submission by 5:00am (UK time) on 23 May 2025.
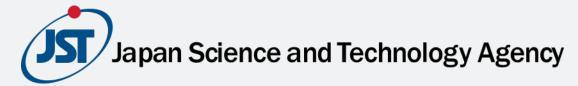
Contact details

For questions related to this specific funding opportunity please contact:

- EPSRC contact email: AI.Robotics@epsrc.ukri.org
- JST contact email: aspire-uk@jst.go.jp

Any queries regarding the system or the submission of applications through the Funding Service should be directed to the helpdesk.

- Email: support@funding-service.ukri.org or phone: 01793 547490
- Lines are open Monday to Thursday 8:30am to 5:00pm, Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm

Questions?