

SJTU-KU Joint Seed Fund Call for Proposal Guidelines 2026

PURPOSE OF THE SCHEME

The SJTU-KU Joint Seed Fund is designed to catalyze high-impact research collaborations between Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Khalifa University. The primary goal is to foster initial synergies that lead to long-term and sustainable partnerships in the future.

The program specifically encourages:

- **Reciprocal Research Visits:** At least 2 reciprocal visits for staff and/or research students (i.e., at least one visit by KU staff/students to SJTU and one by SJTU staff/students to KU);
- **Co-advising of PhD students:** The program strongly encourages both sides to exchange Ph.D. students for co-advising (please note: this is not a dual-degree program).
- **Scholarly Output:** The submission of at least two joint, co-authored publications or equivalent research output.

FIELDS TO BE SUPPORTED IN 2026

Proposals are welcome in all disciplines. Applications in the following areas are particularly encouraged:

- Future Energy
- Health and Longevity Sciences
- Software and Computation
- Artificial Intelligence and Information Science

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applications must be jointly prepared by a PI from SJTU and a PI from KU as mandatory.
- Principal Applicants on each side must be permanent or fixed-term academic staff of SJTU or KU (full-time faculty of professorial rank, assistant professor and above). For fixed-term staff, the duration of their contract must extend beyond the end date of the funded project to ensure continuity and successful completion.
- 1 Co-Investigator (Co-I) from KU is mandatory (professorial rank faculty, assistant professor and above). A maximum of 2 Co-Is from KU are permitted.
- Applicants are permitted to submit a maximum of one proposal to this call, either as a PI or a Co-I.
- **SJTU Specific Eligibility:** Each SJTU PI may hold only one active seed fund project at a time. PI who is currently undertaking other Seed Fund projects (including Global Initiative Fund, Joint Seed Fund, Specialized Seed Fund, or Collaboration Inception Fund, etc.) is not eligible to apply as PI for this round.
- **KU Specific Eligibility:** KU faculty who are the Principal Investigator (PI) Awardee on one of the following listed KU internally FULLY FUNDED AWARDS, are not permitted to apply as PI to this call; RIG-2024, RIG-2025, KU-QU-2025, KU-TU-2025. KU faculty who receive an award as PI on any ongoing joint research program grant calls, will not be awarded as PI. All KU faculty are permitted to apply as Co-I.
- Collaborators from other institutions or organizations besides SJTU and KU are eligible to participate in projects but are not eligible for any financial support from SJTU or KU. Applications may typically

include not more than one Visiting/Third-party Fellow (per proposal) whose home university is neither SJTU nor KU; they will not be considered as an applicant.

- Applicants will be required to engage with the dissemination of the outcomes of their initiative, including presenting at a colloquium or other event organised by SJTU and/or KU following the completion of the initiative, as required.
- Applicants must have met in full the conditions and requirements of any internal seed funding previously awarded to them by either university, including final project reports.

FUNDING STRUCTURE

Funding will be provided jointly by KU and SJTU, and each institution will provide funds to its own faculty members:

- Khalifa University (KU): Provides a total of 37,500 AED per project.
- Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU): Provides a total of 70,000 RMB per project.

Funding will be provided for projects lasting no longer than 24 months and will be available for projects starting in September 2026 and completing no later than September 2028.

All financial expenditures must strictly adhere to the respective institutional regulations and fiscal year requirements of the recipient's home university.

A project report is to be submitted within one month from the end of the initiative or funding period. Templates for reports will be provided, and all grants must be spent within the period indicated.

Funding Scale

Up to **5 projects** will be funded in this round.

FUNDING EXPENDITURE

For SJTU PIs: Each selected project will receive RMB 70,000, primarily to support international travel costs (at least 90% of the total budget) incurred by the SJTU team. Up to 10% may be used for hiring temporary project assistants.

For KU PIs: Each selected project will receive AED 37,500 total requested budget across two fiscal years. Funds must be fully spent by the end of each fiscal year. There is no carry-over of funds between fiscal years. Activities supported by KU can include the following project-related costs (KU policies apply):

- Operational costs e.g. materials and minor equipment, (CAPEX is not permitted).
- Travel (PI, Co-I, research personnel, PhD students).
- Other Direct Costs (e.g. software and publications).
- Technical Consulting (e.g. research visitor and fees-for-services).
- Research personnel costs.
- KU graduate student stipend should be costed as KU In-Kind.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The lead investigators from SJTU and KU need to work together to prepare one unified, identical application form and submit the completed version (one PDF file, incl. appendix) to their home university as follow:

- The SJTU PIs should submit the completed application form (one PDF file, incl. appendix) through the online questionnaire system. The questionnaire can be accessed at: <https://wj.sjtu.edu.cn/q/JFoLPdGz> . Please note that this page can only be accessed with a jAccount,
- The KU PIs should submit through the KU Fibi system at: <https://rms.ku.ac.ae/fibi>.

- A submission is only considered valid if the identical application has been successfully received by both universities. Unilateral submissions or inconsistent versions will be disqualified.

Required Materials (Combined into one PDF file):

- Application Form
- CVs for all team members (max 2 pages per person)

KEY DATES

Applications open: Monday 22 June, 2026

Applications close: Wednesday 22 July 2026, 23:59 Beijing Time/ 19:30 UAE Time

Communication of results to applicants: w/c 24 August, 2026

Awards begin: September 2026

Awards finish: September 2028

REVIEW CRITERIA

Both internal review committees will assess each proposal according to the following criteria.

1. Research Challenge & Innovation • Does the overview clearly identify the gap/need for research in this challenge area? • Is the potential to advance on the current state-of-the-art adequately evidenced and justified?
2. Objectives & Approach • Are the overall objectives and tasks well-reasoned, integrated and appropriate to realistically deliver the goal(s) in the project period? • To what extent does the approach convey the transformative potential or originality of the work? • How clearly presented and justified is the design and basis for the collaboration
3. Team & Impact of Collaboration • Does the composition of the project team convey clear added-value in terms of being able to effectively address the research challenge and deliver the research outputs? • Does the project team utilize an interdisciplinary approach to ensure the whole of the expertise is greater than the sum of the individual parts? • Is there a distinct advantage provided by this collaboration that is not possible by the two institutions working individually?
4. Deliverables & Project Impact • Have a range of reasonable technical research deliverables and other tangible outputs been identified? Including but not limited to; potential for joint research publications, graduate theses, filing of intellectual property disclosures, or government engagement, for example. • How clearly linked are the outcomes to the planned activities and performance indicators, such as co-supervision of PhD candidates, joint papers, external funding applications, joint research with industry and proposal for policy recommendations • Is delivery of the project expected to jointly strengthen both ZJU & KU profiles in terms of research, education and/or institutional visibility? • How extensive are the benefits of the project expected to be in terms of impact on the local and international economy, industry, environment and academic community? • What is the extent to which future collaborations are possible as a result of the proposed exchange activities?
5. Resource Management & Risk Mitigation

- Is the level of requested resource reasonable and adequate to deliver the proposed activities? (incl. consideration of cash and in-kind)
- Does the team have access to the necessary facilities to deliver the project scope?
- Have risks been accurately identified and adequately mitigated?

Proposals are received by both SJTU and KU for separate review at each institution. A joint committee will convene to select up to five final proposals. Final results will be announced by means of an email communication to the successful faculty members.

QUERIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Please email: PreAward@ku.ac.ae (KU) and icae@sjtu.edu.cn (SJTU)