UCL-The Chinese University of Hong Kong Strategic Partner Funds

Guidelines for Applicants 2026-2027

University College London (UCL) and The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) have identified each other as strategic partners to foster deep collaborations in research and education. The Office of the Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement) at UCL and the Office of Academic Links at CUHK have established the UCL-CUHK Strategic Partner Funds to support collaborative research initiatives through a joint call for proposals.

1. Projects

This call invites research proposals in areas of mutual interest and complementary strength that will strengthen the partnership between UCL and CUHK. The initiative seeks to build on existing links and stimulate new ones between UCL and CUHK. Successful applicants should clearly outline in their proposal a specific project or joint research activity that they would like to explore with their counterparts.

Proposals from all fields are welcome but those related to the following fields are particularly encouraged:

- **Clinical and translational medicine** (e.g. oncology, cardiology, ophthalmology, medicine, and gene and cell therapy)
- **Health and healthcare** (e.g. computational healthcare, global population health)
- **Life sciences** (e.g. neuroscience, brain science and biology)

Proposals should be co-led by a Lead Applicant at each institution and can involve a wider team of participants from each institution, as appropriate to the activities proposed.

Up to three joint projects will be selected for funding. Proposals will be assessed by a committee composed of members from both institutions.

2. Eligibility

Applications are open to UCL and CUHK staff members in the following roles:

UCL:

- Professor or equivalent
- Associate Professor / Reader or equivalent
- Senior Lecturer / Principal Researcher / Principal Research Associate or equivalent
- Lecturer / Senior Research Associate or equivalent
- Post Doc / Researcher / Research Associate or equivalent

CUHK:

- Faculty members ranked at Research Assistant Professors or above holding full-time employment from all disciplines are welcome to apply. Award holders are required to remain in university service for not less than a year upon completion of the activities in the proposal.

Notes:

- *Each Lead Applicant from UCL and CUHK can only submit one application per round of the Strategic Partner Funds.*
- *Applicants from UCL must have an open-ended UCL contract or a fixed-term contract which lasts until at least July 2026.*
- *Applicants from UCL are not required to have a doctorate to apply but do need to hold a role at one of the levels described above.*
- *PhD students are not eligible to apply but their involvement in the delivery of the project, for example as research assistants or interns, is encouraged.*
- *UCL Professional Service & VP Office staff are not eligible to apply but can take part in the project where this supports its aims and objectives.*
- *Please note that in order to increase the reach and breadth of access across UCL to the 26/27 Global Engagement funding schemes (the Global Engagement Funds (GEF) and Partner Funds), the following rules are in place for UCL applicants:*
    - *You can submit a maximum of two proposals across these funding streams, either as a Lead Applicant or co-applicant. For example, you could submit 1 GEF proposal and 1 Partner Funds proposal, or 2 GEF proposals, or 2 Partner Funds proposals.*
    - *You can receive a maximum of 1 award per scheme as a Lead Applicant. For example, you could receive 1 GEF award and/or 1 Partner Funds award.*
    - *If you were the Lead Applicant of a proposal that received GE seed funding in 25/26, you cannot apply as a Lead Applicant for any 26/27 GE seed funding schemes, but you will be eligible for the 27/28 schemes. Please note: A special exception can be made where there is strong potential for significant impact and/or scaling up of collaboration with a global partner based on the outcomes of 25/26 project activity. Please contact us if you feel this applies to your activity.*

3. Collaborative activities

Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Joint seminars/workshops (remotely or in person) which might lead to joint publications, future research collaborations, grant applications, or other follow-up activity. Funding may be used for external services required to facilitate an event, e.g. professional moderation or technical support.
- Meetings, or preliminary scoping work and baseline research/data gathering, to underpin the preparation of a long-term collaborative partnership (e.g. preparation of a PhD summer school, double degree, future exchange agreement, etc)
- Salary for research assistants and interns/student helpers. UCL student casual wage costs for working on the collaboration can be covered, as can travel, accommodation and subsistence essential to the activity, in line with UCL's expense policy, sustainability

agenda and coronavirus guidance. For CUHK, please refer to the Student Helper Engagement Scheme for the guidelines.

- Research materials and supplies (a cap of one-third of the overall project cost is applicable to UCL applicants).

The above list is not exhaustive, and we understand that there may be other ways you wish to conduct the project. Where appropriate, we strongly encourage applicants to explore methods of remote collaboration, within the limits of what is permissible within the financial regulations of each institution.

4. What cannot be funded by the UCL-CUHK Strategic Partner Funds?

- Activity that does not involve UCL and CUHK partners; work for which there is already a significant existing funding stream; activity that has already happened.
- Costings should be appropriate and relevant to the activity, for example the provision of alcoholic beverages for partners is not considered a valuable use of funds, unless it can be described how hospitality is critical for the building of this relationship or necessary/culturally significant for an event, e.g. a public exhibition.
- Items which would normally be included in a research or teaching grant. This seed funding supports and develops UCL and CUHK collaboration and lacks the scale and resources to support the core components of a research or teaching project.
- Teaching time buyout cannot be funded.
- **UCL:** A Worktribe costing is NOT necessary for the UCL-CUHK Strategic Partner Funds.
- **CUHK**: The costs of equipment, scholarships, tuition fees, and honoraria are not supported.

5. Value and duration

Up to £20,000 is available per successful proposal. Funding will be provided jointly by UCL and CUHK, with approximately GBP 10,000 from UCL going to the UCL Lead Applicant and HKD 100,000 from CUHK going to the CUHK Lead Applicant. However, only one joint proposal should be submitted through the link included in point 7.

Projects will be funded for a period of 12 months from August 2026 to July 2027. Funds provided by UCL and CUHK must be spent by 31 July 2027 (activities for which the funds are allocated must take place before 31 July 2027).

Applicants should take this into account when planning their proposed activity.

6. Timeline

Call for proposals	20 May 2026
Deadline for submission of proposals	11:59pm (UK time) 19 June 2026 / 06:59am (HK Time) 20 June 2026
Communication of results to applicants	By the end of July 2026
Start date of Awards	From 1 August 2026

7. Submission of proposals

i) Proposals are to be prepared jointly but only one proposal is submitted **by the UCL Lead Applicant by midnight (GMT) 19 June 2026.**

ii) Proposals must be submitted to UCL at the following link:
APPLY

iii) **CUHK**: An endorsement form must be completed by the CUHK heads of departments/units and faculty deans/directors of institutes to confirm their (1) support for the application, and (2) intention to renew the applicants' contract if the applicants' existing contract will expire within one year upon completion of the project. To download the form, please click here.

8. Ethics approval

UCL: Please check UCL's guidelines regarding research ethics. Applicants are responsible for reading these guidelines and ensuring projects adhere to UCL's ethics approval policy and process.

UCL guidelines can be found here:

- Research Ethics Committee
- Overseas Research Roadmap
- Export Controls

CUHK: The University's policy on research ethics is outlined in the University's research policy. Please contact the Research Office for advice if needed.

9. Assessment

i) Proposals are received by UCL Global Engagement and forwarded to CUHK for separate review at each institution. The final decision will be made jointly.

ii) Selection criteria: both internal review committees will assess each proposal according to the following criteria:

- **Project design and rationale:** how clearly presented and justified is the design and basis for the collaboration?
- **Project impact:** how clearly linked are the outcomes to the planned activities and performance indicators, such as joint papers, external funding applications, joint research with industry and proposals for policy recommendations?
- **Impact of collaboration:** is there a distinct advantage provided by this collaboration that is not possible by the two institutions working individually?
- **Capacity for future collaboration:** to what extent are future collaborations possible as a result of the proposed activities?

iii) A joint committee will convene to select the final proposals.

10. Communication of results

Final results will be announced by means of an email communication to the successful faculty members.

11. Reporting after project completion

All awardees must, as a condition of receiving an award under this call, complete a narrative report of achievements (of between one and two pages), preferably with images, within three months after the project's completion.

CUHK awardees will be invited to complete a survey annually for three to five consecutive years to facilitate tracking of the partnership development.

12. Queries & contacts

If you experience any problems making an online application via Jotform, or have any questions about the UCL-CUHK Strategic Partner Funds, please contact:

UCL:
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CUHK:
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