



The University of Toronto – Zhejiang University

Joint Call for Proposal 2026

Guidelines for Applicants

Deadline: 27 April 2026

The University of Toronto (U of T) and Zhejiang University (ZJU) continue to develop their strategic partnership and offering opportunities for research collaboration and engagement through a joint call for proposals on SDGs aligned with their institutional priorities, complementary strengths, and track record of cooperation. Priority areas are: SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 13: Climate Action.

It is hoped that, besides tangible academic outcomes such as the exchange and co-supervision of PhD students and submission of co-authored publications, projects will result in long-lasting, substantial collaborations with a view to enabling principal investigators (PIs) to subsequently apply for external funding to support the next phase of their joint research.

The Fund is open to applications from all disciplines and up to 5 proposals will be selected for funding.

Proposals demonstrating strong relevance to strategic priorities at the participating institutions and that aim to provide opportunities for collaborative doctoral training and mobility at a future stage are encouraged.

Activities and Scope

Proposals may include targeted research support such as joint workshops, researcher exchanges, and the formation or development of a collaborative network.

All proposals must be led by principal investigators. Mutual external collaborators (including researchers from other universities internationally, or those working in non-academic contexts such as industry or government) cannot lead an application but can be involved in the proposed activities at their own expense, where the benefit of their involvement to the collaboration is justified in the proposal. Doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows, and adjunct faculty may also participate.

To facilitate research cooperation and co-supervision of students, each awarded PI at ZJU should send a PhD student to U of T for a research stay of at least six months, subject to the hosting capacity of the U of T PI. Additional funding is available from ZJU's Graduate School upon completion of the relevant application process.

Costs

The funding provided is intended to support expenses, including but not limited to costs of travel (PIs, post-doctoral fellows, research associates, graduate researchers) between the institutions, and costs associated with workshops and meetings. General details of eligible and ineligible costs are detailed in the table below. Additional requirements specific to ZJU will be communicated later to awarded ZJU PIs.

Each partner should pay its own costs and there can be no transfer of funds between institutions. For example, travel costs for ZJU staff should be in the ZJU budget, costs for subsistence for Toronto staff should be allocated in the Toronto budget and costs of hosting a workshop in Hangzhou, should be costed in the ZJU budget.

Eligible Costs	Ineligible costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel costs including flights, hotels and subsistence• Costs associated with organising workshops and meetings (excluding RA/administrative staff)• Research costs, including consumables (up to a maximum of 2,200 CAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replacement research/teaching costs• Directly incurred staff e.g. Research Assistant• Directly allocated costs including applicants' time• Indirect costs/estates costs• Equipment• Scholarships• Conference attendance• Tuition fees• Honoraria

Eligibility

To be eligible, each proposal must include a PI from ZJU and a PI from U of T. Eligible applicants may only lead one application as a PI but can be listed as a co-investigator on other applications.

Applicants from all disciplines are welcome to apply. Proposals demonstrating strong relevance to strategic priorities at the participating institutions are strongly encouraged.

Awardees from any of the previous bilateral seed funding schemes between U of T and ZJU may only re-apply to this scheme if their application seeks to significantly expand the number of researchers in their collaboration (for example, by including researchers from the third institution).

U of T: U of T faculty members who meet the [University's definition of a Principal Investigator \(PI\)](#) are eligible to apply. PIs must hold an appointment for the full duration of the grant's funding period plus one year. Successful status-only PIs must hold grant funds at an account within the University.

U of T aims to increase tri-agency 'market share' and the associated allocation benefits that accrue. When evaluating closely ranked proposals, preference will be given to U of T PIs who currently hold tri-agency funding or have an active application in progress for a tri-agency funding opportunity.

Proposals demonstrating strong relevance to the UofT's [Institutional Strategic Initiatives](#) are strongly encouraged.

ZJU: ZJU PIs must be full-time faculty members. Postdocs are not eligible to apply for the fund.

Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Adherence to respective equality/Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies are an important feature of this program to ensure that all participants can do their best work, thrive and succeed. Applicant teams should consider how they can take meaningful steps in their future collaborations to foster an environment that values, supports and respects a diverse range of views, knowledge and experiences. Applicants should consider EDI as it applies to gender, indigenous peoples, disabilities, career stages, and sectors.

Value and Duration

Funding will be provided to support up to 5 proposals, for a funding period of 2 years. Participation of applicants from each institution will be supported by that institution:

Recipients will be awarded up to:

- CAD \$20,000 CAD from U of T to support Toronto applicants over two years.
- CNY 100,000 from ZJU to support ZJU applicants over two years.

The ZJU PI will be able to spend first year funds between May (tentatively), 2026 and November 2026; second year funding will be spent between March (tentatively), 2027 and November, 2027. The grants will be effective for U of T PI between May 2026 to May 2028.

For U of T PI, any extension will require written approval from U of T's International Office. For ZJU PI, ZJU funds must be fully spent by the end of November of each funding year. ZJU Funds cannot be carried over into the following year.

Each institution will pay funds directly to its researchers. Approval of expenditure will be governed by each university for the portion of funding provided, with any significant variations requiring approval from all participating institutions.

A budget should be provided, and expenditure should be made according to the budget plan. Major changes to the expenditure plan will require prior approval.

Procurement of goods and services should be adhered to the University's purchasing guidelines.

Evaluation Criteria

A joint review committee will assess each proposal according to its academic merit using the following criteria

- **Project design and rationale (10 points):** How clearly presented and justified is the basis for, and design of, the project? How do the proposed activities assist with establishing new and emerging research collaborations? What are the anticipated benefits of involving ECRs and/or graduate researchers?
- **Collaborator complementarity (10 points):** What is the added value of the new or emerging collaboration? How do the proposed activities combine mutual areas of interest and strength?
- **Potential impact (10 points):** What desired outcomes do the planned activities set out to achieve? What are the anticipated benefits of the activities to local or international communities? How does your proposal demonstrate strong relevance to strategic priorities of the participating institutions?

- **Capacity for future collaboration/funding (20 points):** What is the potential for this project to foster ongoing collaboration, and through what mechanism(s)? How well does the proposed collaboration plan to access external funding?

Preference will also be given to early-career researchers (ECRs)¹

The proposals will be assessed and recommended for selection by a committee composed of members of both institutions appointed by the Associate Vice-President, International Partnership of the Office of the Vice-President International for Toronto and the Associate Vice President of ZJU.

How to Apply

This is a joint call and one joint application per project should be submitted via E-mail.

- Your proposal must be jointly prepared by the lead investigators (primary applicant) from both institutions in English and submitted to both institutions at the same time, via email:
 - Zhejiang University: Mr. Jun Tong (tj@zju.edu.cn), Office of Global Engagement
 - University of Toronto: Ms. Rikki Zhao (international@utoronto.ca), Office of the Vice-President International
- The joint application form should include the following components saved as one **PDF document: a coversheet, proposal narrative, project budget, project timeline, and CVs.**
- All applications require endorsement by the relevant ZJU Head of School on the China side. The ZJU Principal Investigator must complete their endorsement coversheet.
- Only completed proposals submitted to the email of both institutions by the deadline will be accepted.

Timeline

Call for proposals opens	27 th March 2026
Deadline for submission	27 th April 2026
Announcement of results	By end of May 2026

Forfeiture of Grant:

For U of T, extensions must be sought for any grants not spent by the project end date or the grant must be returned so that unspent balances can be re-allocated.

Reporting

All awardees must, as a condition of receiving an award under this call, complete a mid-term and a final narrative report (of between 1 and 2 pages) that describes the outcomes, nature of collaboration, project impact, graduate researcher involvement and opportunities for future collaboration that evolved from their

¹ U of T's definition on ECRs: "an individual who is within five years of their first faculty appointment. This duration excludes any period of career break.

project. A single joint report should be submitted to all involved institutions within three months of the project end date, using the contacts listed below.

Information about this Call

All queries related to this call for joint research proposals should be directed to:

The University of Toronto

Rikki Zhao, Director, China Partnership

E: rikki.zhao@utoronto.ca

Zhejiang University

Jun Tong, Senior Manager, Office of Global

Engagement

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