

Graduate Institute for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI
[Basic Biology Program]
Application Guidelines October 2026 (SOKENDAI Recommendation)
(Monbukagakusho: MEXT Scholarship Student)

1. General Prospectus

The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI was founded as a national university in Japan on October 1, 1988. The basic concept of SOKENDAI is to develop a new postgraduate education system in Japan. Its key features are as follows:

- 1) SOKENDAI offers both three-year and five-year doctoral programs.
- 2) SOKENDAI consists of 20 programs under one institute operated by 20 Inter-University Research Institutes and Independent Administrative Institutions (“parent institutions”)
- 3) Research and education are carried out in close cooperation with the parent institutions.
- 4) Broad and international visions are fostered by enhanced interchange between various institutions and universities in Japan and abroad.

The parent institutions provide Japanese and foreign scientists with opportunities to conduct advanced joint research in various scientific branches. They are equipped with extensive research facilities and function as centers for advanced studies. Presently, they are cooperating to establish a world-class program for postgraduate education at SOKENDAI.

[Admission Policy]

<What SOKENDAI expects of our grad students>

SOKENDAI tends to attract students who have a strong interest in research, who constantly hone their abundant intellect and sensitivity with the aim of conducting research in the new era, while taking a “bird's-eye view” of the entire field of study, and who have the will and enthusiasm to be active on the international stage.

<Basic policy for the selection of our grad students>

In selecting students for admission, SOKENDAI places importance on basic academic ability and logical thinking ability to actively promote research in the cutting-edge 20 research institutes affiliated with SOKENDAI. In order to properly judge such abilities, various selections will be made according to the respective fields of specialization

2. Basic Biology Program Outline

In the Basic Biology program, students will investigate the commonality and diversity that characterize living organisms, the universal mechanisms and the structure that maintain them, and the mechanisms of change that produce diversity. This program aims to train researchers who can discover more fundamental and important problems in biological sciences, and challenge themselves to solve these by cultivating the advanced research skills and rich academic knowledge necessary to conduct independent research activities as a researcher in this field.

3. Doctoral Degree Requirements

A Doctor of Philosophy degree shall be conferred on students who have satisfied the requirements of their respective doctoral programs as prescribed below.

[Three-year doctoral program]

Students must be enrolled in SOKENDAI for at least three years, earn the necessary credits, receive the necessary research guidance, and pass the examination for a doctoral thesis. Students who are recognized as having achieved significant progress may be able to graduate in a shorter time frame.

[Five-year doctoral program]

Students must be enrolled in SOKENDAI for at least five years earn the necessary credits, receive the necessary research guidance, and pass the examination for a doctoral thesis. Students who are recognized as having achieved significant progress may be able to graduate in a shorter time frame.

4. Qualifications for Application

[Qualifications for the three-year doctoral program]

Applicants must fulfill one of the following conditions;

- 1) A master's degree or a degree equivalent to a professional degree has been conferred or is expected to be conferred in a foreign country by the month preceding enrollment;
- 2) Hold or are expected to obtain a master's degree or a professional degree by the month preceding enrollment in Japan;
- 3) Have been recognized by SOKENDAI as having academic ability equivalent to or superior to those who have a master's degree or a professional degree by the individual screening of the Admission Qualifications of SOKENDAI, and have attained an age of 24 years by the end of the month preceding enrollment.

Notes:

*The qualifications concern not the date of completion of the master's course of study, but the date of conferral of a master's or equivalent professional degree.

*Applicants who intend to apply under Provision 3) above are required to undergo qualification screening to confirm "having academic ability equivalent to those who have a master's degree or a professional degree" before the application can be submitted. If applicable, please contact the Student Affairs Section via email in advance.

*Those who have completed or are expected to complete a master's course before the time of enrollment in the doctoral program, but are not expected to be granted a master's or professional degree by that time must undergo extra screening procedures before the application.

*Other than the above qualifications 1) to 3), eligible applicants include those who otherwise satisfy or will satisfy the qualification requirements for general admission to SOKENDAI. If you have any questions regarding the qualifications for admission, please contact the Student Affairs Section in advance.

[Qualifications for the five-year doctoral program]

Applicants must fulfill one of the following conditions;

- 1) Have completed or are expected to complete a 16-year course of school education in a foreign country by the month preceding enrollment;
- 2) Have graduated or are expected to graduate from a Japanese university as specified in Article 83 of the School Education Law by the month preceding enrollment;
- 3) Have been conferred or are expected to be conferred a degree equivalent to a bachelor's degree by the month preceding enrollment by completing an educational course of three or more years at a foreign university or a foreign educational institute;
- 4) Have completed a 15-year course of school education in a foreign country by the end of the month preceding enrollment.
- 5) Have been recognized as having academic ability equivalent to a university graduate or higher by the individual screening of Admission Qualifications of SOKENDAI, and have attained an age of 22 years by the end of the month preceding enrollment.

Notes:

Applicants who intend to apply under Provisions 4) or 5) are required to undergo qualification screening before the application can be submitted. If applicable, please contact the Student Affairs Section via email in advance.

*Besides the above qualifications 1) –5), eligible applicants include those who otherwise satisfy or will satisfy the qualification requirements for general admission to SOKENDAI. If you have any questions regarding the qualifications for admission, please contact the Student Affairs Section in advance.

5. Application Procedures

[Application Period]

Thursday, October 9 to Wednesday, November 5, 2025*

*The application must arrive no later than the last day of the application period without failure.

[Contact the prospective supervisor]

Before applying, the applicant must contact the prospective supervisor and confirm whether he/she can accept the applicant if the applicant passes the examination.

[Application Method]

The applicant must submit a complete set of application documents either by mail or email. For details, please confirm following points 1) and 2). The application must reach SOKENDAI no later than the application deadline.

1) Mail

The complete set of application documents must be submitted by registered express mail or a similar service. If there are any problems with the submitted documents, SOKENDAI will contact the applicant via email.

Mailing address;

Student Affairs Section, Division of Academic and Student Affairs

The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI

Shonan Village, Hayama, Miura, Kanagawa 240-0193 JAPAN

Telephone number +81-46-858-1526

2) Email

The complete set of application documents must be submitted via email. If the attach files containing more than 10 megabytes, please send them separately and number each email subject. Additionally, when sending files, please attach them to your email directly, without using uploaders.

After receiving the applicant's email, SOKENDAI will send the applicant a confirmation email. If the applicant does not receive our email within a week of submitting the documents, please contact us.

Email address: gakusei@ml.soken.ac.jp (Student Affairs Section, SOKENDAI)

Notes: If the applicant will be accepted for enrollment, the applicant must submit the original official transcript and certification of graduation.

6. Selection Schedule and Method

Schedule

Monday, December 8, 2025

Method

1. Three-year doctoral program:

Document review and an interview will be conducted.

(a) Document review: Review will be conducted regarding the contents of the application, including academic transcripts and related materials.

(b) Interview: The interview will be conducted remotely using Zoom meeting, and the applicants will participate from their home or in some other appropriate place. The interview will take about 30 minutes. The first 15 minutes will be spent exploring the applicant's past research and future research aspirations. During the interview, the applicants will be allowed to use Whiteboard on Zoom, or a handwritten document pre-submitted as an electronic file by the day before the exam. The remaining 15 minutes will be used for a question-and-answer session covering the content of the applicant's presentation and submitted documents.

2. Five-year doctoral program:

Document review, written examination, and an interview will be conducted.

(a) Document review: Review will be conducted regarding the contents of the application, including academic transcripts and related materials.

(b) Written examination: The applicants will take the written exam (a short essay) at their home or in some other appropriate place. A question sheet (an electronic file; password-protected) will be emailed to applicants on the day before the exam. The following day, applicants will receive the password to open the question sheet and begin the written exam. The written exam will take an hour. At the end of the exam, the answer sheet(s) should be converted to an electronic file and submitted via email.

(c) Interview: The interview will be conducted remotely using Zoom meeting, and the applicants will participate from their home or in some other appropriate place. The interview will take about 30 minutes. The first 15 minutes will be spent exploring the applicant's past research and future research aspirations. During the interview, the applicants will be allowed to use Whiteboard on Zoom, or a handwritten document pre-submitted as an electronic file

by the day before the exam. The remaining 15 minutes will be used for a question-and-answer session covering the content of the applicant's presentation and submitted documents.

* Questions regarding this section may be addressed to:

Graduate Student Affairs Section

International Relations & Research Cooperation Division

National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS)

Nishigonaka 38, Myodaiji, Okazaki 444-8585, Japan

E-mail: r7139@orion.ac.jp

Web site: <http://www.nibb.ac.jp/en/univ/>

7. Announcement of Result

Preliminary admission and scholarship announcements will be sent in April 2026.

Final announcements will be sent by July 2026.

8. Contact Details for Inquiries

Student Affairs Section, Division of Academic and Student Affairs

The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI

E-mail: gakusei@ml.soken.ac.jp

Application Guidelines for Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho: MEXT) Foreign Research Student Scholarship 2026 (SOKENDAI Recommendation)

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) offers the following Japanese government scholarship to foreign students who wish to study at SOKENDAI:

1. Qualifications and Conditions

1) Applicants:

The scholarship is offered to new foreign students who have earned the equivalent level of a graduate degree with outstanding academic performance. The applicant must have a minimum GPA 2.3 or higher and is expected to maintain the equivalent level during the scholarship period.

2) Nationality:

The applicant must hold the nationality of a country that is specified by MEXT. The applicant who holds Japanese citizenship or a nationality of a country that is not specified by MEXT at the time of application is not eligible.

To see the list of specified nationalities, please confirm the following webpage.

https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/file/List_of_Specified_Nationalities.pdf

3) Age:

The applicant must have been born on or after April 2, 1991.

4) Academic Background:

For the five-year doctoral program, the applicant must have completed a 16-year course of study in an educational institutions of a foreign country or is expected to complete such a course by September 30, 2026.

The applicant for the three-year doctoral program must have been granted or be expected to be granted a master's degree or a professional degree by September 30, 2026.

For the details, please see "4. Qualifications for Application" in the application guidelines.

5) Study Area:

The study area must be in the same field as the applicant has studied or in a related one. This field of study must be available at SOKENDAI.

6) Language Ability:

The applicant must fulfill at least one of the requirements listed below:

- a) Holds an English proficiency test score equivalent to B2 or above on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

To see the CEFR Equivalency Chart, please confirm the following webpage.

<https://www.soken.ac.jp/en/admission/file/CEFRquivalencyChart.pdf>

- b) Has completed an educational program whose primary language of instruction is English that satisfies the entrance requirements for the Five-year doctoral program or Three-year doctoral program at SOKENDAI

In fields that require Japanese language ability (Japanese linguistics, Japanese literature, Japanese history and Japanese law), the applicant must fulfill at least one of the requirements listed below:

- a) Passed the JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) with a score of N2 or higher
- b) Has completed an educational program whose primary language of instruction is Japanese, satisfying the entrance requirements for the Five-year doctoral program or Three-year doctoral program at SOKENDAI

7) Health:

The applicant has no physical or mental conditions hindering the applicant's study in Japan

8) Arrival in Japan:

The applicant must be able to arrive in Japan on the dates designated by SOKENDAI between mid-September and the beginning of October 2026 (applicants who cannot arrive in Japan within the designated period should decline acceptance. Those who arrive in Japan before the designated date for personal reasons will NOT be provided traveling expenses to Japan).

9) Visa Requirement:

If selected, the applicant will be required to acquire a "Student (ryugaku)" visa in the home country prior to coming to Japan and enter Japan with "Student" status. Therefore, the successful applicant who is already in Japan under a different residence status must change his/her residence status to "Student" by the end of September 2026 and re-enter Japan with "Student" status. (The applicant who comes to Japan with a visa or residence status other than "Student" will NOT qualify for the Japanese government scholarship. Additionally, please note that the applicant who changes his/her residence status to any status other than "Student" after entry into Japan will lose his/her status as a Japanese government scholarship student.) Please be informed that there is a possibility that your application for the original residence status may not be approved after the period of MEXT scholarship student.

10) Others:

The applicant under the conditions stated below, will NOT be considered a candidate.

- a) Military personnel and military civilian employees registered on the active list;
- b) Is not able to arrive in Japan on the appointed dates;
- c) Has received the MEXT scholarship within the past three years. However, this restriction does not apply to the followings;

- (1) Those who have been enrolled as scholarship students in a Japanese language and culture program or as a scholarship student in the Japan-Korea Joint Undergraduate Course for Science and Engineering.
- (2) Those who have obtained or are expected to obtain a degree as undergraduate students of the Japanese Government (MEXT) Scholarship programs (university recommendation/special selection).
- d) Has applies for another MEXT scholarship.
- e) Has enrolled in a Japanese university with “Student (ryugaku)” status at the time of the application and has enrolled/will be enrolled in a Japanese university as a privately-financed foreign student between the time of application and the beginning of the scholarship payment.
- f) Has already won a scholarship that is prohibited from receiving along with the MEXT scholarship such as JSPS DC Research Fellowships.

2. Terms of Scholarship

1) Three-year doctoral program

If the grantee directly enrolls in the three-year doctoral program after coming to Japan, the scholarship will be payable for three years (standard program term) (starting in October 2026 and finishing in September 2029.)

2) Five-year doctoral program

If the grantee directly enrolls in the five-year doctoral program after coming to Japan, the scholarship will be payable for two years (the first two years of the standard program term) (starting in October 2026 and finishing in September 2028). For the grantee to extend his/her scholarship until the end of the standard program term (until September 2031), he/she should apply for an extension of the scholarship that must be approved by MEXT. Please note that depending on his/her academic achievement and the budget condition of MEXT, his/her application will not necessarily be approved.

3. Scholarship Benefits

1) Scholarship amount:

The scholarship amount for 2026 has not been fixed yet.

For reference, the scholarship amount for 2025 is as follows.

Enrolled Doctoral Program	Amount of Stipend per Month
1 and 2-year student of 5-year doctoral program	146,000 yen
3 to 5-year student of 5-year doctoral program,	147,000yen

1 to 3-year student of 3-year doctoral program	
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The amount for 2026 may change depending on the budget conditions.

The scholarship will NOT be paid to the grantee who takes a leave of absence from the university or does not attend classes for an extended period.

2) Transportation to Japan:

According to his/her itinerary and route as designated by MEXT, the grantee will be provided with an economy-class air ticket from the international airport nearest to his/her home address to Narita/Haneda airport, or the international airport in Japan nearest to the campus of SOKENDAI where the grantee is placed. Other expenses, such as inland transportation from his/her place of residence to the international airport, airport tax, and any special taxes on overseas travel, will NOT be provided. (The address stated in the application is considered as "home address of the grantee.")

*No air tickets will be issued to a grantee for a route from any country other than the country of his/her nationality.

3) Transportation from Japan:

For a grantee who returns to his/her home country by a specified date after the scholarship has ended, MEXT will pay for an economy class air ticket from Narita/Haneda airport or the international airport in Japan nearest to the campus of SOKENDAI, where the grantee is placed, to the international airport nearest to his/her home address.

* The grantee should purchase air travel insurance at his/her own expense.

* The airports for departure and return should be in the country of the grantee's nationality.

4) Education fee:

The fees for the admission and tuition at SOKENDAI will be paid by MEXT.

4. Recommendation and Selection

1) Scholarship Recommendation:

After screening at SOKENDAI, the President of SOKENDAI, recommends MEXT applicants who have shown academic excellence.

2) Scholarship Selection:

Candidates are screened and selected by a selection committee from a pool of applicants recommended by the presidents of all universities in Japan. Based on the results of the screening and selection by the committee, MEXT selects grantees and their scholarship terms.

3) Documents to be submitted:

- a) Application Form (Attached)
- b) Field of study and Research Plan (Attached)
- c) Photograph or digital image sized 4.5 cm x 3.5 cm taken within the past six months (Full-faced photograph. When photographed, the applicant must not wear a hat or cap hiding a part of his/her face or head. The applicant must write his/her name and nationality on the back of the photograph.)
- d) Proof of nationality (preferably a copy of the applicant's passport).
- e) Certified academic records (originals or certified copies)

The applicant must submit certified academic records (issued by the university) for each academic year of all universities attended.

- Applicants applying for the three-year doctoral program must submit Official Transcripts for all academic years from both undergraduate and graduate schools.
- Applicants applying for the five-year doctoral program must submit Official Transcripts for all academic years from undergraduate school. Applicants who have master's or doctoral degrees must submit Official Transcripts from graduate schools
- f) Diploma or degree certificate (originals or certified copies)

The applicants must submit a diploma or degree certificate from all the universities attended (or a document certifying that the applicants will graduate from the university by September 2026).

- Applicants applying for the three-year doctoral program must submit the Certificate of Graduation both undergraduate and graduate schools.
- Applicants applying for the five-year doctoral program must submit the Certificate of Graduation from their undergraduate school. Applicants who graduated from graduate schools must submit the Certificates of Graduation from graduate schools.
- Applicants who have not yet graduated from a university must submit an attested document certifying that the applicants will graduate before entering the doctoral program.
- g) Proof of the applicant's academic level in his/her previous university (e.g., grading scale, grading system).
- h) A recommendation letter from the applicant's home institution, addressed to the President of SOKENDAI (original)
- A recommendation letter must be issued by the Dean or equivalent (or higher) of the applicant's current university or the most recent university the applicant attended if he/she is not currently enrolled in any university. SOKENDAI cannot accept a recommendation letter from department head or academic supervisors.

- Please attach a document indicating the position of the person who wrote the recommendation letter.

i) Abstracts of thesis

If the applicant has no theses or publications, please submit a summary of his/her current research project.

j) Certificate of English proficiency

The applicant must submit a certificate of English in either one, as shown below.

- i. Official score report, such as TOEFL iBT, and IELTS, proving that applicants have English proficiency equivalent to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) B2 level or above. Please note that the applicant must have undergone one of these tests after January 1, 2024
- ii. Applicants for the five-year doctoral program: a document certifying that the applicant has completed his/her bachelor's course in English as the main language
- iii. Applicants for the three-year doctoral program: a document certifying that the applicant has completed his/her master's course in English as the main language

[How to submit score record]

i. TOEFL iBT

Please submit the original official score report by one of the following methods.

- Applicants submit the original official score report by mail with application documents
- Applicants submit a copy of the official score report with application documents and make arrangement for the ETS to send the original official score report directly to SOKENDAI.

The Institution Code and Institution Name are as follows.

Institution Code: 7564

Institution Name: SOKENDAI (The Graduate University for Advanced Studies)

The score must be submitted to us during the application period. Please note that it will take for six weeks or more to receive the score since applicants ask ETS to send it.

ii. IELTS

Please submit a copy of the official score report with application documents.

If applicants cannot submit any of the above scores during the application period,

please contact the Student Affairs Section of SOKENDAI.

- k) Proof of the applicant's specific knowledge and capability in his/her field, such as a commendation for research achievement (optional)

5. Additional considerations

- 1) The documents mentioned above must be prepared in Japanese or English. If the documents are prepared in languages other than Japanese or English, an official English translation must be included.
- 2) The documents above must be prepared using word-processing software. Print all required documents on A4 size paper. (if possible)
- 3) Admission may be withdrawn at any time even after enrollment if the application documents are found to be invalid or contain false information.

6. Notes

- 1) The recipients of the MEXT scholarship may have his/her scholarship revoked in the following cases: If the recipient wrongly receives the scholarship under the following circumstances, he/she may be required to return the scholarship for that period.
 - a) When the recipient has made false statements on the application;
 - b) When the recipient violates his/her contractual agreement with MEXT;
 - c) When the recipient has been the subject of disciplinary action at SOKENDAI;
 - d) When it becomes definitive that the recipient will not be able to graduate (or complete the program) within the standard program terms because of poor academic achievement or suspension;
 - e) When the recipient changes his/her "Student" visa status to some other status of residence;
 - f) When the recipient receives another scholarship (a scholarship or fellowship from Japanese government, a Japanese government-related organization and others) not approved for acceptance in conjunction with the MEXT Scholarship ;
 - g) When the recipient proceeds to a higher course without approval for the extension of the scholarship by MEXT;
 - h) When the recipient withdraws from SOKENDAI or transfers to a different graduate school.
- 2) If the recipient takes a leave of absence from SOKENDAI or does not attend classes for an extended period, he/she will NOT receive scholarship payments during the period.

- 3) Security Export Control: Depending on the specifics of the education and research instructions they wish to receive upon entering the doctoral program, applicants may be subject to regulations on the export/transfer of controlled technologies based on the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law. Please consult the Student Affairs Section for further details.