

Graduate Institute for Advanced Studies, SOKENDAI
[Physiological Sciences Program]
Application Guidelines October 2026 (SOKENDAI Recommendation)
(Monbukagakusho: MEXT Scholarship Student)
SOKENDAI PGP (The International Priority Graduate Programs)
“Interdisciplinary Program in Information Science and Life Science for Leading
Researchers on AI and Data Science”

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.

*This program is only for the five-year doctoral program.

[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 20 cutting-edge 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. Physiological Sciences Program Outlines

The Physiological Sciences program provides education and research guidance to comprehensively clarify the mechanisms of body functions, from the molecular-cellular level, which is the basic structure of living organisms, to the whole-body level, which is composed of systems. We train researchers to be active participants in the fields of medicine and life sciences, with a focus on physiology and neuroscience.

3. The International Priority Graduate Program Outlines

This MEXT scholarship is offered for the special program "Interdisciplinary Program in Information Science and Life Science for Leading Researchers on AI and Data Science," which has been granted to SOKENDAI by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). This program aims to develop next-generation global researchers and highly skilled professionals capable of leading research on artificial intelligence, data science, and other scientific fields.

For this program, the application is open to anybody with the nationality of countries with diplomatic relations with the Japanese government. However, based on the strategy of the Japanese government to accept international students to gain from the advancements of other countries, around 40% of the positions are targeted at applicants from Southeast Asian countries in this program.

4. 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.

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 timeframe.

5. Qualifications for Application

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 in 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.

6. Application Procedures

[Application Period]

First Round	From Thursday, May 29 to Wednesday, June 25, 2025*
Second Round	From Thursday, November 6 to Wednesday, December 3, 2025*

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

[Contact the prospective supervisor]

Before applying, the applicant must contact the prospective supervisor and confirm whether they 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 the 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 is any problem with the submitted documents, SOKENDAI will contact the applicant via email.

Mailing address;

Student Affairs Section, Division of Academic and Student Affairs
SOKENDAI (The Graduate University for Advanced Studies)
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 you 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 is accepted for enrollment, the applicant must submit the original official transcript and certification of graduation.

Important notes for the application

The applicants are required to have obtained the following score(s) by the time of application.

The original copy of score sheet must be submitted by the deadline (first round: Friday, August 1, 2025, second round: Tuesday, January 13, 2026). (Electric submission of the score sheet via email will not be accepted.)

- TOEFL PBT: 550 or higher
- TOEFL iBT: 80 or higher
- IELTS: 6.0 or higher

* Applicants whose native language is English and who have graduated or are expected to graduate from universities through classes and instruction in English may be exempted from submitting the English test score.

Attention: Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho: MEXT) Foreign Research Student Scholarship applies different criteria to prove applicants' English proficiency. For detail, please refer to the section of "Application Guidelines for Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho: MEXT) Foreign Research Student Scholarship"

7. Selection Schedule and Method

Schedule

First Round: Monday, August 18 to Tuesday, August 19, 2025

Second Round: Tuesday, January 20 to Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Method

Five-year doctoral program:

Document screening, written examination (i.e., short essay), and interview will be conducted.

Important notes for the written examination:

- The written examination (essay) will last up to 90 minutes.
- The written examination will be conducted remotely via Zoom web and email. On the day before the examination, the applicants will receive a password-locked question sheet file and an answer sheet file by email. The applicants will receive the password for the sheets by email or Zoom when the examination starts.
- At the end of written examination, the answer sheets must be submitted via email immediately. Failure to submit the answer sheets within 20 minutes after the end of the examination will, in principle, result in disqualification.

Important notes for the interview:

- The interview will last up to 20 minutes.
- For 10 minutes, the applicants will explain the content of previous research (or, for applicants with no prior research experience, the content of their program(s) of study), reason for applying, and research ambitions. The applicants will use their own computer and software, such as PowerPoint, for the presentation. The applicants will not be allowed to use devices other than their own computers or distribute supplemental materials for presentations.
- In the remaining time, the committee members will ask questions about the content of the applicant's submitted documents and their presentation.

Other notes:

- The applicant can take the examination at home or in some other place as long as the space

is isolated and the examination contents are not leaked to a third party.

- The examiner will record the video of the Zoom session during the examination. The video recording will not be used for any purpose other than the examination.
- The applicant and examiner will arrange a practice session of the Zoom meeting to ensure the procedure and connection on the day before the examination.

* 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.nips.ac.jp/eng/graduate/>

8. Announcement of Result

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

Final announcements will be sent by July 2026.

9. 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 international students who wish to study at SOKENDAI:

1. Qualifications and Conditions

1) Applicants:

The scholarship is offered to new international 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 with diplomatic relations with the Japanese government. The applicant who holds Japanese citizenship at the time of application is not eligible.

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 institution of a foreign country or is expected to complete such a course by September 30, 2026.

For the details, please see “5. 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/application_info/pnp/file/CEFR_1.pdf

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

In fields that require Japanese language proficiency (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 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 applicants will be required to acquire a "Student (ryugaku)" visa in the home country prior to coming to Japan and entering Japan with "Student" status. Therefore, the successful applicants who are already in Japan under a different residence status must change their 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 applicants who change their residence status to any status other than "Student" after entry into Japan will lose their 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 already won a scholarship that is prohibited from receiving along with the MEXT scholarship such as JSPS DC Research Fellowships.

2. Terms of Scholarship

If the grantees directly enroll 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 grantees to extend their scholarship until the end of the standard program term (until September 2031), they should apply for an extension of the scholarship that must be approved by MEXT.

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 Stipends 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	147,000 yen

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 their itinerary and route, as designated by MEXT, the grantees will be provided with an economy-class air ticket from the international airport nearest to their home address to Narita/Haneda airport or the international airport in Japan nearest to the campus of SOKENDAI where the grantees are placed. Other expenses, such as inland transportation from their 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 grantees for a route from any country other than the country of their nationality.

3) Transportation from Japan:

For grantees who return to their 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 grantees are placed, to the international airport nearest to their home address.

* The grantees should purchase air travel insurance at their 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 applicants must not wear a hat or cap hiding a part of their face or head. The applicant must write their 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 must submit Official Transcripts for all academic years from undergraduate school. Applicants with 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 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 their 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 applicants attended if they are 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 applicants have no theses or publications, please submit a summary of their current research project.
 - j) Certificate of English proficiency
Applicants 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 applicants must have undergone one of these tests after January 1, 2024.
 - ii. Document certifying that the applicants have completed their bachelor's course in English as the main language

Attention: Physiological Sciences Program applies different criteria to prove applicants' English proficiency. For detail, please refer to the section of "6. Application Procedures"
- [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 six weeks or more to receive the score since applicants ask ETS to send it.

ii. IELTS

Please submit the IELTS Test Report Form by one of the following methods.

- Submit the original Paper Test Report Form by mail with application documents.
- Submit a copy of the official score report with application documents and arrange for their IELTS test centre to send the original Paper Test Report Form directly to SOKENDAI.

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

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

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 their 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 their scholarship revoked in the following cases: If the recipients wrongly receive the scholarship under the following circumstances, they may be required to return the scholarship for that period.
 - a) When the recipients have made false statements on the application;
 - b) When the recipients violate their contractual agreement with MEXT;
 - c) When the recipients have been the subject of disciplinary action at SOKENDAI;
 - d) When it becomes definitive that the recipients 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 recipients change their "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 recipients proceed to higher courses without approval for the extension of the scholarship by MEXT;
 - h) When the recipients withdraw from SOKENDAI or transfers to a different graduate school;
- 2) If the recipients take a leave of absence from SOKENDAI or does not attend classes for an extended period, they 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.